



**Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Faculty of Health Sciences
Medical School for International Health
in collaboration with Columbia University Medical Center**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Sara Carlson Sternglass

(212) 305-9587

ss3808@columbia.edu

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**MSIH ALUMNI CONVENE TO DEVELOP ALUMNI ASSOCIATION AND PRESENT GLOBAL
HEALTH RESEARCH AND CLINICAL ACTIVITIES**

2011 Alumni Symposium brings alumni from all ten graduating classes together

New York, New York – November 28, 2011 – Alumni representing all ten graduating classes from the Medical School for International Health (MSIH) convened to consider a proposal to develop an alumni association at a one-day symposium on November 6, 2011 at Columbia University Medical Center.

Alumni reviewed the Strategic Plan developed by the MSIH Alumni Association Committee and listened to presentations on current alumni research and global health activities.

The MSIH Alumni Association Committee, chaired by Brian Neese, MD ('05), MPH, prepared the Strategic Plan and distributed copies in advance of the meeting in order to facilitate discussion of key points. Attendees split into three working groups: Communications, Officer Elections, and By-laws, and were tasked with developing a timetable and a checklist of actions needed in order to finalize the Strategic Plan before it is submitted to Ben-Gurion University's Faculty of Health Sciences for approval.

The committee chaired by Dr. Neese is comprised of Ryan Carroll, MD, MPH ('02), Miriam Rahav, MD ('08), Joe Sakran, MD ('05) MPH, Erica Spatz, MD ('03),



MSIH alumni presented their global health activities and reviewed plans to establish a MSIH Alumni Association at the 2011 Alumni Symposium. (from left to right) MSIH-CU Director Richard J. Deckelbaum, MSIH-BGU Director A. Mark Clarfield, Brian Neese MD ('05), MPH, Ryan Carroll, MD ('02), MPH, Melissa Dawalt Klein, MD ('05) MPH, and Erica Spatz, MD ('03), MPH.

MPH, and Javeed Sukhera, MD ('07). They will submit their proposal to the university in early 2012, and anticipate that the entire alumni community will vote to ratify the strategic plan and development of an MSIH alumni association. Expressing satisfaction with the proceedings, Brian Neese said, "The MSIH alumni are getting together, organizing, and creating an Alumni Association that will impact the community of MSIH graduates, as well current medical students, in a powerful way. This is a road untraveled for us, so we're hoping for as much alumni participation and creativity as we can gather. We're definitely on our way."

Located in Beer-Sheva, Israel, the MSIH is a collaboration between Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) that trains doctors for careers in global health (GH). Established in 1997, the MSIH's mission is to prepare physicians to address the political, economic, environmental and cultural factors that impact upon the health of populations and individuals. Over 300 physician graduates of the medical school are working to advance global health in North America, the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

Afternoon sessions at the symposium were devoted to presentations by alumni engaged in global health-related research and clinical activities. Pamela Cooper, MA, MSIH Administrative Director, who has been conducting a ten year project to track the global health activities of MSIH, presented an overview of alumni engagement in global health. The project effort was recently highlighted in a poster presentation at the combined conference of the Global Health Education Consortium (GHEC) and the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH) conference in Montreal. The data derived from interviews and on-going alumni surveys indicates that 70.5% of graduates from the MSIH's first five classes have been involved in one or more areas of global health within two to eight years after graduation. The MSIH alumni tracking project also shows that 62% of graduates from the first eight cohorts (2002-2009 graduates) are involved in one or more areas of global health and that many graduates are involved in four or more areas of global health-related clinical activity or research. The school concludes that in multiple respects, its alumni are meeting, if not surpassing, the medical school's benchmark for advancing its mission and global health priorities.

Five alumni gave presentations on their current global health activities, beginning with Alumni Committee Chair Brian Neese, MD ('05), MPH, who is the United States Air Force's International Health Specialist for Latin America. He discussed *The US Air Force's Cross-Cultural and Global Health Activities*, and how his position as an International Health Specialist enables him to be at the forefront of policy and

630 W. 168th St., PH15E-1512 New York, New York 10032 212-305-9587 bgeu-md@columbia.edu

stability operations, the goal of which is to improve the flow of aid and assets to underserved countries in Latin America during a disaster or war.

[Ryan Carroll, MD \('02\), MPH](#) (seen at right with Admissions Committee Co-Chair Lynne Quittell, MD) is a Pediatric Critical Care Intensivist at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, Massachusetts who spends a third of his time working in Uganda on the Blantyre Malaria Project. With nearly ten years of research on pediatric cerebral malaria, Dr.



Carroll and his colleagues have developed a method using nitric oxide to reverse the symptoms of this type of malaria, with few adverse effects. *Translational Research in Cerebral Malaria* describes the research and clinical data compiled in order to develop the treatment plan for cerebral malaria using nitric oxide. The final step in this process will be to create systems for the local community to implement independent of outside assistance.



Erica Spatz, MD ('03) MPH (seen at left) was a Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholar at Yale University School of Medicine and has been working to expand the safety net for the uninsured in New Haven, Connecticut. She gave an overview of *Working with Medically Underserved Communities in New Haven, Connecticut: Dealing with Health Disparities in Economically Advanced Urban Settings*. The study focused on the

difficulties underserved populations face not only in receiving care, but in continuing care, and provided recommendations for improving timely and coordinated care through a patient navigation model called Project Access. Project Access, a donated system of care from hospitals and specialists, and designed for underserved individuals, eliminates some of the administrative and bureaucratic problems that reduce a patient's participation in their own healthcare needs.

Melissa Dawalt Klein, MD ('05) MPH is now an internist at the Cleveland Clinic, but recently completed work with Unity Health Care Program, which delivers healthcare to federal correctional facilities in Washington, D.C. *Applying Lessons Learned in Correctional Medicine and Re-entry from the Unity Health Care Program, Washington, D.C.* exposes the tremendous difficulty that the prison population and newly-released prisoners face in receiving timely and adequate healthcare. Federal statistics estimate that the United States prison population suffers from substance abuse problems, severe mental illness and homelessness at much higher rates than the general population, (upwards of 50% of all inmates suffer from mental health

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problems such as depression, mania, and psychotic disorders) and tend to receive sub-par care or no care at all.

The final presentation was by Henry Welch, MD ('05), who has just returned from a two-year Global Health fellowship in Botswana. This fellowship is a collaboration between the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the government of Botswana/South Africa, and focuses on pediatric education and research.

After completing residency training, alumni are expected to make significant contributions to global health through clinical work, policy development and medical education. It is clear from the 2011 Alumni Symposium and alumni tracking results that the Medical School for International Health alumni are fulfilling the mission of the MSIH, and are committed to working with underserved populations and incorporating global health activities and service into their careers.

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Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis and are currently being accepting for the 2012 entering class. The MSIH is pleased to announce that [half-tuition scholarships are available](#) for students accepted into the entering class of 2012. For consideration, applicants must have their applications submitted and completed by February 1, 2012. For more information about the MSIH and Columbia University's partnership with Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in the MSIH, contact the MSIH Admissions Office at (212) 305-9587, visit our website at <http://cumc.columbia.edu/dept/bgcu-md>, or email us at bgcu-md@columbia.edu.