



**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

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December 14, 2011

**CANADIAN HEAD OF MEDICAL SCHOOL FOR INTERNATIONAL HEALTH IS  
RECIPIENT OF TWO MAJOR AWARDS**

**Richard J. Deckelbaum, MD receives McGill University's Medicine Alumni Global Award and  
the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Global Health Education Consortium**

December 14, 2011 – New York, New York –MSIH-CU Director Richard Deckelbaum, MD, a McGill University School of Medicine graduate and native of Montreal, Canada, is the recipient of the Global Health Education Consortium's (GHEC) highest award, the *Lifetime Achievement Award*. It was presented to him at the November 13, 2011 opening reception of the three-day combined conference of GHEC, the [Consortium of Universities for Global Health](#) (CUGH), and the Canadian Society for International Health (CSIH), for his tireless work over the past four decades to improve the health of underserved populations throughout the world. Dr. Deckelbaum, who is the President of GHEC, is the Director of the Institute of Human Nutrition at Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC), and a pediatric nutritionist and gastroenterologist who co-founded the [Medical School for International Health \(MSIH\)](#).



*Dr. Richard J. Deckelbaum, recipient of GHEC's Lifetime Achievement Award (seen second from right) with North American Senior Editor for the Lancet Maja Zecevic, PhD, MPH, GHEC co-founder Anwar Velji, MD, and son Dan Deckelbaum, MD, MPH (a McGill University graduate) at the opening reception of the combined GHEC-CUGH-CSIH conference.*

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Deckelbaum gave a special thank-you to his colleagues at Columbia University, the Medical School for International Health, and at GHEC, as well as to Kaya Deckelbaum,

his wife of forty-two years, and to his four children. “Receiving this special award doesn’t just happen,” he remarked. “It’s a result of institutions and of people who have allowed me to be worthy to join the distinguished cohort of past GHEC awardees. Thanks to all of you for making this happen.”

In October Deckelbaum was honored at McGill University’s 2011 Dean’s Homecoming Reception with the McGill University School of Medicine’s Alumni Global Award, the *Community Service Award*. In accepting the award, Deckelbaum proudly noted that “between me and my four children we hold nine degrees from McGill.”

While in medical school at McGill University, Deckelbaum performed clerkships in Greece and Newfoundland, getting hands-on experience working in rural areas with limited access to healthcare. “I got interested in under-developed countries after completing my medical school clerkships at McGill University, and helped set up the Canadian version of the Peace Corps,” he explained. After finishing his second year of Pediatric residency training at Hadassah University Hospital in Jerusalem, Richard spent a year working for the Zambia Flying Doctor Service, flying into remote regions of Zambia and Tanzania for weeks at a time to treat sick natives and their children, who had no access to healthcare services. He then returned to Hadassah University Hospital, and was instrumental in opening the first pediatric hospital unit on the West Bank, where he worked with both Israeli and Palestinian physicians to coordinate medical services. When asked how he was able to bring these doctors together, he noted that it required being “extremely sensitive and respectful to both sides.”

His interest in pediatrics and nutrition grew as he completed a fellowship in Gastroenterology for both adult and pediatric patients at Royal Victoria Hospital and Montreal Children’s Hospital. What followed then was years of research training in gastroenterology and biophysics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Boston University, and a steady progression of professional and academic appointments.

Deckelbaum realized that underserved populations required a different kind of doctor with specific preparation to work with diverse populations. In 1996, Deckelbaum founded the Medical School for International Health, as a collaboration between Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and Columbia University Medical Center. The MSIH was created to address the growing need for physicians who understand the impact of economic, cultural, environmental, and political factors on the health of individuals and populations. A four-year, North American-style medical school, the MSIH incorporates

[global health coursework](#) into all four years of the medical school curriculum through modules, workshops, and global health clinical clerkships in sites throughout the world.

The annual GHEC conference, held this year in Montreal with CUGH and CSIH, brought together 1400 global health practitioners, educators, students, and representatives of government agencies and non-profit organizations from around the world to review global health research, discuss global health education, and to plan advocacy initiatives to maintain funding for global health in the face of the worldwide economic recession. This year's theme, *Advancing Health Equity in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, focused on the global burden of disease, innovations to advance global health equity, partnership building for education and research in global health, as well as presentations on the social, economic and environmental determinants of health and human rights, ethics, and policy. Five MSIH medical students presented their poster *Integrative global health curriculum for medical school students: Assessments and advances* on the integrated global health curriculum at the MSIH.

Now in its fourteenth year, the MSIH enrolls more than 160 students from around the world and has 326 graduates in residency, fellowship, private practice, and research in the U.S., Canada, and abroad. In the conclusion of his acceptance speech at GHEC, Deckelbaum reflected, "To me it's particularly gratifying to receive this award in Montreal, and share this ceremony with other McGill Medicine graduates. Thank you McGill!" Canadian students comprise more than fifteen percent of the MSIH student body, and the MSIH actively recruits students who have graduated from some of Canada's most competitive colleges and universities.

After completing [residency training](#), alumni are expected to make significant contributions to global health through clinical work, policy development, and medical education. Pamela Cooper, MA, the MSIH Administrative Director, who has been conducting a ten-year longitudinal project to track the global health outcomes of MSIH alumni, highlighted the impact of the MSIH's alumni contributions to global health in a poster titled *Can partnerships in global health medical education advance capacity building in medical education and global health?* at the GHEC conference. The data 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. With Richard Deckelbaum at the helm, graduates with this specialized global health training from the MSIH are

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clearly following his example, and making significant progress in fulfilling the healthcare needs of underserved populations.

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Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis and are currently being accepting for the 2012 entering class. A generous contribution to the MSIH Scholarship Fund has made it possible for the school to award tuition support to members of the 2012 entering class who have completed applications by February 1, 2012. For more information about admissions and tuition support, 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](mailto:bgcu-md@columbia.edu).