



OHSU Global Health Center

Mission Statement: The Global Health Center facilitates OHSU collaboration with the global health community to promote quality and equity in health care worldwide. Through the Global Health Center, OHSU offers programs for students, faculty, staff and partners that promote global health awareness, research, education, service and advocacy. The Global Health Center networks with local, national and international communities and organizations, such as Mercy Corps and Medical Teams International.

Definition: The Global Health Center defines global health as "*optimal wellness that transcends national boundaries and is best addressed by cooperative solutions.*" This includes domestic as well as international health and is focused on health in resource-poor communities.

Peter Spencer, Ph.D., F.C.R.Path., is the director of the Global Health Center, a professor of neurology, OHSU School of Medicine, and a senior scientist of the OHSU Center for Research on Occupational and Environmental Toxicology, which he established and directed for 21 years. Dr. Spencer, who has long researched the causes of and solutions to neglected human diseases in low-income countries, hopes the Global Health Center will spawn a new generation of health professionals cognizant of and certified in global health.

"We have a growing number of immigrants and refugee groups from countries around the world presenting familiar, new, and sometimes rare, illnesses to our health professionals," Spencer said. "The Global Health Center equips our students with the knowledge they will need to address these ailments, both at home and abroad, and it builds exchanges across cultures that advances societal and individual health and wellness."

Many health professionals believe globalization -- the process by which policy and technological advancements of recent decades have spurred explosions in trade, investment and migration -- has helped the spread of avian influenza, multi-drug resistant tuberculosis and other usually preventable or uncommon infectious diseases. Globalization has also meant a rise in industries across the globe, with the all-too-common release of hazardous chemicals in the workplace, the environment, and in food.

"OHSU's contributions to world health are being demonstrated in many ways," Spencer said. He pointed to long-standing mental health programs for Oregon's refugees and immigrants; emergency medicine education programs in China, Sri Lanka and Turkey; tropical medicine and surgery programs in India; tropical neurology programs in Africa; a women's health program in Ethiopia, and tuberculosis eradication programs offered around the world.

"OHSU's global health initiatives have come together under the single umbrella of the Global Health Center through the vision and urging of students across all our schools; in 2005, they formed a global health alliance to raise the visibility of global health education, research, collaboration and advocacy at OHSU," he said. Their pioneering work continues in the Global Health Center Student Interest Group and in other contributions to Global Health Center programs.

Created in August 2007, the OHSU Global Health Center was quickly recognized by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) with the award of one of 31 highly competitive NIH Fogarty Center

Framework Programs for Global Health. The NIH's goal in creating the Framework research-education program was two-fold: "to create an administrative framework to bring multiple schools (engineering, business, chemistry, biology, communications, public health, medicine, dental, environmental studies, and others) together on the topic of global health, and to develop interdisciplinary global health curricula for undergraduates, graduates, and professional school students." In addition to OHSU, 2008 Fogarty Framework awardees included: Brown, Duke, Fudan (China), Harvard, Northwestern, Tulane, University of California (Berkeley, Irvine, and San Francisco), and Yale.

Titled *Global Health in Changing Environments*, OHSU's Fogarty program draws on OHSU's strengths in environmental science and neurosciences, and in cancer and public health. "We devised a framework to promote interaction and synergy among individuals engaged in global health activities and to nourish the development and maturation of new global health researchers and educators at home and abroad."

Today, in 2011, the OHSU Global Health Center offers a suite of elective courses for students and health care professionals.

- (1) *Global Health in Changing Environments* is designed to provide students from across the health and life sciences with an introduction to the diverse knowledge- and skill-sets they will need for effective professional practice at home and abroad. The course examines the major forces that shape population health across the world. It employs a region-focused, case study-based approach to realizing the following strategic objectives: promoting interdisciplinary thinking and collaboration, improving students' understanding of a range of key global health issues, and challenging students to think critically and constructively about these issues. The elective is offered by Dr. Spencer.
- (2) *interdisciplinary Community Health and Education Exchange (iCHEE)* is an interdisciplinary elective that brings students of dentistry, medicine, nursing and pharmacy together with faculty mentors and members of local refugee communities. The course is designed to facilitate bi-directional cultural exchange in the context of sharing information on health, hygiene and nutrition. The course was conceived and is led by the Global Health Center's Valerie Palmer, who serves on the Board of Directors of Portland's Immigrant Refugee and Community Organization, one of several Portland communities where the student-refugee exchange takes place.
- (3) *Health and Disease in Context* is a student-led elective run in collaboration with Portland's Central City Concern. It seeks to provide students with (i) structured experiences at local social service and health care organizations and (ii) probing discussions with their clients and staff, in order to provide aspiring health professionals with the tools to both understand and address some of the root causes and consequences of social inequalities. In doing so, students are challenged to develop and apply an ethic of social responsibility and civic engagement.
- (4) *Conversations in Global Health* is a fortnightly lunchtime forum dedicated to discussions of global or local topical interest. Conceived and led by the Global Health Center's Dr. Jay Kravitz, this seminar is open to all within the OHSU community and the general public. OHSU students may earn 1 hour of elective credit by registering with their respective registrars.

- (5) *Global Health Epidemiology*. Global Health practice is grounded in the challenging discipline of public health. This course explores the interrelated complexities of social, political, economic, and environmental factors that govern health in our world. A multidisciplinary faculty discusses infectious diseases, refugees, public policy, risk communication, research, environmental health, and outbreak investigations.
- (6) *Concentration in Global Health Studies for Epidemiology & Biostatistics MPH Students*. This newly offered program provides MPH students a global health perspective so that they may "operate" successfully in the global health realm, developing facility with complex health, cross-cultural, and social issues in our ever-changing world. Graduates of this innovative program will enter the workforce prepared to communicate, introduce, adapt, supervise, or implement policies, technologies, and research agendas appropriate to challenging environments. The course is led by Dr. Kravitz.
- (7) *Professionals' Training in Global Health (PTGH)* offers a comprehensive medical training in global primary health for those who want to work overseas. This program is for physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners and physician assistants with an active Oregon medical license who are interested in training for volunteer medical work in low-income countries, including disaster relief. PTGH updates physicians' clinical skills in primary care (family medicine and emergency medicine), and provides courses in public health, infectious disease, tropical medicine and related fields pertinent to overseas work. PTGH is led by the Global Health Center's Dr. Andy Harris.

The foregoing education and training programs are intended to help produce a critical mass of clinicians and community leaders who will work to improve the health of the poor and disenfranchised in Oregon and beyond.

The long-range goal of the OHSU Global Health Center is to maintain a compact, efficient operation on the OHSU campus and invest in building capacity in global communities. This embodies the principle that there can be an effective two-way exchange on matters such as cultural competency, health education, disease research, and clinical practice. Further development of global health programs is critically dependent on federal and private funding.

The Global Health Center relies on the generous donation of many individuals of their time and talents; many have assisted in information gathering, proposal writing, and community service. The OHSU Library has procured the Ovid Global Health database with access to thousands of global health articles. In addition, a Donate Frequent Flyer Miles promotion box link has been created on the GHC website by OHSU Web Strategies to help offset student travel expenses when engaged in global health work. The goodwill that is surrounding this initiative, though impossible to quantify, has resulted in many tangible benefits.

More information on OHSU's Global Health Center programs is available at www.ohsu.edu/ghc