



Weill Cornell Medicine

Center for Global Health

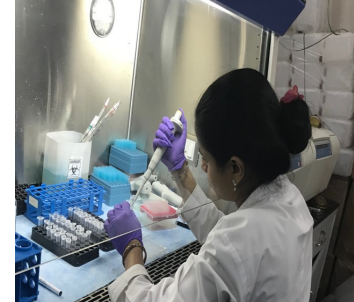
Women in Global Health Research Initiative

APRIL 2022 | ISSUE 2

FEMALE GLOBAL SCHOLARS NEWSLETTER



“THERE IS NO LIMIT
TO WHAT WE AS
WOMEN CAN
ACCOMPLISH”
- Michelle Obama



TOPICS IN THIS ISSUE

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SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

An Interview with Dr. Gauri Dhumal (BSc, MSc, PhD and 4th Year Female Global Scholar)

Dr. Gauri Dhumal is a passionate anthropologist, with 15+ years of public health research expertise from Pune, India. Her interests range from substance use, especially tobacco and alcohol, to infectious diseases such as HIV and TB disease, mental health, and adolescent health. Dr. Dhumal is currently the study coordinator for the randomized clinical trial entitled "Hybrid trail for alcohol reduction among people living with TB and HIV in India (HATHI)". It is a collaborative project with BJ Government Medical College, Pune-India, and Johns Hopkins University, USA. This research aimed at testing scalable, culturally relevant, evidence-based alcohol interventions to facilitate the rapid integration of effective interventions into TB and HIV/TB care in low-resource settings in India. She received her BSc in Zoology and MSc in Anthropology from the University of Pune and completed her PhD in Anthropology from Savitribai Phule Pune University. She currently has published 22 research papers and has presented her findings at national and international conferences.

Who inspired you to enter the field of public health?

"After completing my BSc in Zoology, I got a job at the similar hospital where I am working currently, Sassoon General Hospital as a help guide, after 6 months, I was promoted to assistant protocol supervisor (APS). This role helped me understand what research is, protocols and research design. My mentor at the time, an anthropologist, inspired me to enroll into a master's program. After my first year, I didn't have enough money to complete my master's degree. It so happened that of my Professors Shaunak Kulkarni had offered me an opportunity to collaborate on his research projects while providing me with a stipend that I could use to pay for school. He was a real motivator throughout my master's and doctorate journey. I am proud to say that I ranked 3rd in my master's graduating class. These experiences changed my life and my passion for public health research."

What resources have helped you advance in your career?

"Firstly, mentor support. The mentorship that I received from the late Prof. Shaunak kulkarni and my current mentor, Dr. Nishi Suryavanshi at Byramjee Jeejeebhoy Government Medical College (BJGMC), Deputy Director at Clinical Research Site have been so important in helping me navigate my journey in research. Both my mentors have always seen more talent and ability within me. Always encouraging me to keep pushing and never give up. Late Prof. Kulkarni (my PhD guide, University of Pune), Dr. Gupta (Director, Healix Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health), Dr. Mave (Director and CRS leader), Dr. Suryavanshi (Deputy Director and CRS Leader) gave me the platform to attend international conferences and present my research findings, it's so important for someone to identify your strengths. Secondly, my family and parents have been so supportive in advancing my career. My mother has been my biggest advocate. She always tells me "focus on your career, and I will take care of your daughter and all other household responsibilities".

What has been your proudest accomplishment or greatest achievement in your career?

"I am a 2020 mentee of the Partnerships for Enhanced Engagement in Research (PEER) Women in Science Mentoring Program for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). As a mentee, I learn about topics such as career success, professional development, communication skills, publishing research and applying for research awards. As part of the program, I had the opportunity to submit a proposal to conduct a "Creating a Hope: A Mixed-Method Study to Identify Most Acceptable Evidence-Based Psychosocial Intervention to Improve the Retention in Care among Indian Youth Diagnosed with Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB)". I can proudly say that I awarded the fund to carry out this research. This has been my greatest professional achievement so far. I am so happy to have been a recipient of the grant!"

What have you gained or hope to gain from the Female Global Scholars Program?

"The program is engaging and motivating. The ability to learn from so many women from different backgrounds has been encouraging. Sessions on proposal/grant writing are great tools for the advancement of my career. Due to other commitments, I was unfortunately unable to attend the sessions that were held in March, but I took forward to participating in similar sessions in the future."

FACULTY FEATURE

Dr. Lindsey Reif, MPH, MSc, DrPH

What is the most rewarding or valuable aspect of your career?

"Getting to see the impact on patients and communities. I am particularly interested in adolescents -- they have their whole lives ahead of them and many face challenges and barriers that are fixable. My motivation is to do work that can help them navigate through these barriers, so that they can grow up to be healthy, have their own families, and impact their communities. Additionally, working on research training programs particularly aimed at supporting women from low-middle-income countries; progress along their global health research careers, is meaningful and rewarding."

Have you ever felt the imposter syndrome, and if so how did you navigate your way through it?

"Absolutely, I think every day I feel a sense of imposter syndrome. However, instead of letting it get to me, I try to use that anxiety to motivate myself. I'm surrounded by such an incredible group of mentors and colleagues, and I sometimes think that I'll never have the skills or the ability to achieve the things they have. But instead of being discouraged, I remind myself, that the opportunity to grow and advance is there at every turn. I take in every opportunity to learn from them and just continually add to my toolbox to gain new skills and new experiences. If I don't push myself to get past a sense of inadequacy, if I don't obtain new skills and experiences, then the work won't get done - our work is about public health impact, and my participation, at whatever level I'm currently at, I hope is helpful and useful and impactful for the health of the populations we study."

Who was/is your role model and/or leadership mentor?

"I'm surrounded by so many incredible female mentors and role models at our center, and in the field of global women's health and adolescent HIV. I think the fact that it is hard for me to pick a single person shows incredible growth for female leadership in health. The first female pioneers in global public health research, whose careers started decades ago and who are now our wise senior mentors, were truly transformative to the field and I think opened up opportunities and planted the seed for young women to carve their own paths in public health research. I think that the exponential growth in the number of women climbing the global health research career ladder is a true testament to their inspiring work and impact on advocating for things like equity in health - both in health outcomes and in health leadership."



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Dr. Reif's interview continued:

What are some reasons you pursued a career in global public health?

"A series of random events lead me to pursue my undergraduate degree at McGill University in Montreal. Looking back, I am so grateful for my choice to move to a large international city and a large University with a diverse and international student body. I was a pre-med major in my first year, and in my elective, medical anthropology, we were assigned the book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*. I found it fascinating how different cultures approached health and wellness and learned how important it is to respect and truly understand these differences. I loved the medical anthropology class, and it was really through this experience that I realized I wanted to do public health at a population level instead of a patient level. I ended up switching my major to Anthropology after my first year and minored in International Development Studies and Social Studies of Medicine, a unique combination I don't think I would have found at another University. I went on to obtain my MPH right after my undergraduate degree at the University of Minnesota."

What does work-life balance look like to you?

"Someone gave me an analogy once, which resonated with me. You can have this straight line of 'perfect balance', and we think we need to perfectly walk this line to always stay balanced. However, some days will be heavily weighted on work, and other days will be heavily weighted on family and personal needs. So in reality it's really squiggly up and down, but as long as when you zoom out, you've spent some time heavily weighted on work and some on heavily weighted on family and personal needs, you can achieve some semblance of balance. Allowing yourself to be open to redirecting or assessing your needs on a day-to-day basis is important. I also really appreciate hearing my mentors be transparent about how they prioritize their time and especially, how they sometimes fail to do this and what they wish they would have done better. It's really comforting to know that they don't have it all figured out and that we all encounter these struggles."

SCHOLAR HIGHLIGHTS & NEWS

Melina Mgongo, MPH



Successfully defended her PhD thesis titled "*Ideal and Reality: Exclusive Breastfeeding practices and Child Nutritional Status in Kilimanjaro Region, Tanzania*".

Nyawira Githai-Kamau, MBChB, MPH



Completed her PhD from the Institute of Tropical Medicine and Infectious Disease, and is starting a post-doctoral position.

Beatrice John, MSc

Has been accepted to a PhD program at the University of the West of Scotland for Fall 2022

Agnes Kiragga, B.Stat, MSc, PhD



Accepted a new position at the African Population and Health Research Center in Nairobi, Kenya.

WOMEN IN HEALTH LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM: TANZANIA CHAPTER

On **March 3rd, 2022**, Weill Bugando School of Medicine of the Catholic University of Health and Allied Sciences, Bugando Medical Centre, Mwanza College of Health and Allied Sciences, and Weill Cornell Medicine, and supported by Jessica and Natan Bibliowicz, hosted the third **Women in Health Leadership Symposium: Tanzania Chapter**. The conference was attended by 95 female health professionals including medical students, postgraduate students, and faculty members, and was the latest milestone in a series of women's health leadership conferences that have been held in Tanzania since 2017. Participants were motivated, inspired, and challenged to discuss how to work together to address gender-based barriers limiting the advancement of women into health leadership positions. The theme for this year's conference was "E-media, Gender and Leadership for Women in Health."

In the opening session, journalist Carol Ndosi discussed the importance of building digital literacy to increase women's visibility online and explained how women in health can communicate their research and health information effectively. In the second session, advocate Cecilia Assey addressed barriers faced by women in leadership in Tanzania, the legal framework for women's rights, and strategies to increase women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions in health. She is leading an initiative to increase reporting and accountability for violence against women in the workplace. In the afternoon, keynote speaker Dr. Neema Mduma shared her experiences in a talk titled, "Challenges Faced and Lessons Learned as a Woman Scientist in Tanzania." Dr. Mduma, a computer scientist and lecturer at the Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology, described her career trajectory and challenges encountered as one of very few women in the field of machine learning in Tanzania. A guest speaker from Adilisha, Ladislaus Musiba, highlighted the organization's work to support girls in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).



The conference concluded with a round-table discussion of "A Way Forward: How we can advance women in health leadership positions," chaired by Dr. Adoline Hokororo and Prof. Domenica Morona. In this session, women collaborated in small groups to propose solutions to tackle gender-based barriers at work. Women recommended several strategies to address these issues, including: the inclusion of men in surveys, conversations and workshops to gain insight into their perspectives surrounding the advancement of women into leadership positions; the development of gender parity awareness lecture series

GRANTS & DUE DATES

- Emerging Global Leader Award (K43) - independent clinical trial required
 - All types of non-AIDS related applications deadline- **November 3rd, 2022**
 - All types of AIDS related applications deadline - **December 9th, 2022**
- Emerging Global Leader Award - (K43) - Independent clinical trial not allowed
 - All types of non-AIDS related applications deadline - **November 3rd, 2022**
 - All types of AIDS related applications deadline - **December 9th, 2022**
- Global Infectious Disease Research Training Program
 - Application deadline - **August 3rd, 2022**

WEBINARS

Topics:

- Time Management Strategies for a Successful Paper
- How to find the right Journal for your Research
- Resubmit your paper with confidence

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 27th, 2022

Women in Global Health Symposium: Global Maternal-Child Health: From Research to Policy

Speaker: Dr. Jyoti Mathad will be moderating a panel discussion

Time: 11 am EST (6:00 pm EAT; 8:30 pm IST)

Once you have registered for the event, you will receive a Zoom link

May 10th, 2022

Speaker: TBD

Topic: Authorship

Time: 9 am EST

Zoom links will be circulated closer to time