



Winter 2005

MIRT NEWS

Multidisciplinary International Research Training (MIRT) Program

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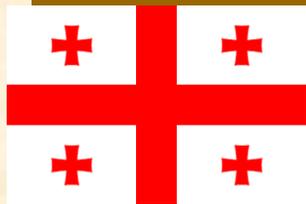


“ See progress report of exciting collaborations initiated with investigators in the Republic of Georgia...” (Page 2)

Tbilisi, Capital Republic of Georgia

“I never imagined that within a year of my first flight that I would be flying overseas. I cannot even dream of what it will be like to step foot on Thailand’s soil ...” (Page 4)

“I just opened this email and felt a wonderful surprise. I still thought about Lima and Dr. Sanchez after all these years ...” (Page 6)



MIRT Launching a New Site Republic of Georgia

The Georgians themselves tell the following story about how they came to possess the land they deem the most beautiful in the world. "When God was distributing portions of the world to all the peoples of the Earth, the Georgians were having a party and doing some serious drinking. As a result they arrived late and were told by God that all the land had already been distributed. When they replied that they were late only because they had been lifting their glasses in praise of Him, God was pleased and gave the Georgians that part of Earth he had been reserving for himself."

Georgi Kokochashvili

The Republic of Georgia, a small picturesque mountainous country situated in the Caucasus on the Black Sea Coast, has a population of approximately 5.4 million with 1.2 million residing in Tbilisi, the capital city. Georgia achieved its independence in 1991 following the breakup of the Soviet Union. In 1992, Georgia became a member of the United Nations, and subsequently joined the Council of Europe in 1999.

Georgia is currently classified as a developing country, though in recent years, the country has moved towards democratization of many of its institutions. Importantly, the country has moved towards a more Western-style free market economy.

These political and social changes have had considerable impact on the health care sector. As a result, Ministry of Health (MOH) officials have been moving towards the optimization of the delivery of health care services.

Health services are provided at two levels in Georgia. The first level represents the delivery of primary care via a series of polyclinics that provide standard outpatient services. The second level represents specialized hospitals that provide inpatient services.

Large towns with 15,000 to 20,000 residents, typically have a fully developed polyclinic systems that maintains dedicated medical records for each patient. Polyclinics are generally supported by large laboratories that maintain a wide spectrum of standard biochemical clinical testing and diagnostic services. More sophisticated clinical testing, (e.g., molecular testing), are outsourced to specialized clinical and research institutes.



Political and economic upheavals in the last two decades have prevented or slowed (and in some instances reversed) important gains in improving population health. The impact has been particularly acute in the context of obstetrics/gynecology and maternal-fetal medicine, although troubling trends such as increasing incidence and severity of coronary heart disease are also quite evident.

During the past year, Dr. Michelle Williams, UW MIRT Program Co-Director and Dr. Surab Vadachkoria, a Research Scientist at Swedish Medical Center and new UW-MIRT faculty member, have developed collaborative research and research training agreements with faculty members at the Chachava Scientific Research Institute of Perinatal Medicine and the Center for Emergency Cardiology in Tbilisi, Georgia.



Professor Guram Vadachkoria and colleagues in the Department of Pathology, Institute of Urology

The institutions are highly regarded primary care and research centers in the areas of Maternal and Child Health and Cardiology, respectively.

During their recent trip to Tbilisi, Drs. Williams and Vadachkoria, met with Professor Paliko Kintraia and others of the Chachava Institute. Professor Kintraia, Director of the Chachava Scientific Research Institute of Perinatal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Tbilisi Medical Academy, and Chief Obstetrician-Gynecologist of Georgian Ministry of Health Care, is a world renowned clinical scientist with over 200 publication.

Together with Professor Kintraia and his colleagues, Drs. Williams and Vadachkoria have identified a project that will serve to host one UW-MIRT fellow this summer. Briefly, one MIRT fellow, attached to the Chachava Institute will work with Professor Kintraia and his staff to assess social and behavioral determinants of adverse pregnancy outcomes among participants in a survey that was recently completed at the Institute. The investigative team expect to use information gained from this research to develop a perinatal risk assessment tool aimed to improve maternal and perinatal outcomes.



Professor Paliko Kintraia

Working with Professor Gulnara Chapidze, Director, Emergency Cardiology Center (ECC), Tbilisi Georgia, Drs. Williams and Vadachkoria have identified one research training opportunity for a UW MIRT graduate student for the summer of 2005.

In addition to the amazing learning opportunities in MCH and cardiology Drs. Williams and Vadachkoria have made considerable progress in expanding opportunity for students in other disciplines for the summer of 2006 and beyond. Discussions with faculty in endocrinology, reproductive biology, demography and physiotherapy are underway.

Our special thanks goes to Dr. Vadachkoria who helped in developing this site.

DIDI MADLOBA (Thank you!)



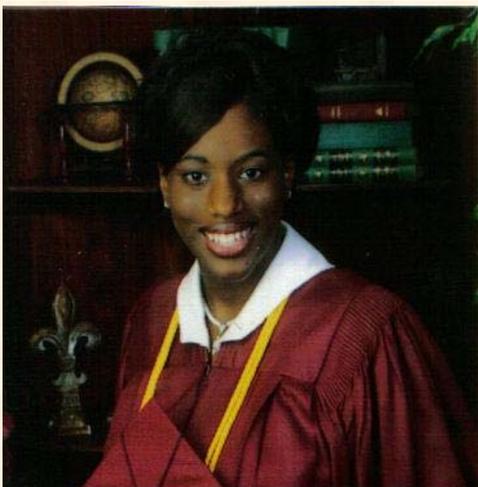
Professor Gulnara Chapidze & Dr. Nona Dolidze



Chachava Scientific Research Institute of Perinatal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology

MIRT welcomes 7 students from five universities. This year's training sites will be Peru, Thailand and Republic of Georgia.

In this issue we feature 4 of the 7 new fellows



Marshala Lee, Undergraduate, Tougaloo College

Marshala's Personal Statement

I am currently a sophomore Chemistry major at Tougaloo College in Tougaloo, Mississippi. I have lived in Mississippi for my whole life. As with most people in the South, I am very close to my family and take pride in the close bond that we have. When the world seems to be going wild, I can always depend on my family for comfort and sanity. In my free time which is sometimes limited, I enjoy surfing the internet, writing poetry, debating, playing basketball, and playing with animals. I am really unsure of what to expect from my research this summer. I flew for the first time last summer on a trip to D.C.

I never imagined that within a year of my first flight that I would be flying overseas. I cannot even dream of what it will be like to step foot on Thailand's soil. In Thailand, I hope to gain much needed research and analytical skills that I can use to better serve my community. After the completion of the program, I want to be able to publish a paper that will not just be a summary of data, but a paper that will be beneficial to a community if not the world. While in Thailand, I hope to widen my horizons by experiencing and embracing the native Thai culture.

"While in Thailand, I hope to widen my horizons by experiencing and embracing the native Thai Culture"

Denny's Personal Statement

I'm currently a junior at the University of Washington, studying Cell and Molecular Biology with a minor in Medical History and Ethics. After receiving my undergraduate degree, I intend to apply to Medical School. Currently, I am working in the Department of Gastroenterology, assisting in research on pancreatic cancer.



Denny Le, Undergraduate, UW

My interests include being involved with cultural events within the community, playing badminton, dancing and enjoying foods from different ethnic backgrounds. What I hope to take away from the MIRT fellowship is the experience and knowledge of another culture. I feel that MIRT will benefit me by broadening my views regarding health care outside the United States and in smaller, rural countries where public health is very minimal or non-existent. Traveling abroad will help me step outside the cultural conventions of the US and gain more knowledge regarding health care system in third world countries. It will further my interest in wanting to improve the quality of life and the health care system for those who are in need of it. I hope to someday be able to help educate and provide services to communities that are lacking such necessary resources, so that all people can have access to a greater quality of life.



Laketa Entzinger, Undergraduate, Xavier U

Laketa's Personal Statement

I am a second year Biology-Premed major with a minor in Chemistry. My interests are in health disparities, women's health, dances and songs of the African Diaspora, Spanish language and culture, and beading. I enjoy learning about different cultures and making connections between those cultures and my own through commonalities and differences. My goals are to study medicine in conjunction with public health to help develop a plan for combating health disparities and become a fluent speaker of the Spanish language. I would like to use the skills that I learn to serve minorities and underserved communities. My expectations for the MIRT fellowship are to gain a two-fold perspective of what healthcare is like in another country versus the United States. I also expect to learn how to conduct public health research, write a scientific paper and submit it for publication, and continue to develop my communication skills.

"My goals are to study medicine in conjunction with public health to help develop a plan for combating health disparities"

Shirley's Personal Statement

Shirley Mori is a senior at the University of California, Los Angeles, where she currently is majoring in Biology and Latin American Studies with a minor in Public Health.

She plans to pursue a joint M.D/M.P.H degree. Her dream is to serve as a physician in underserved communities and one day join the team of "Doctors Without Borders" to become involved in medical projects globally.



Shirley Mori-Torres, Undergraduate, UCLA

Shirley's interest in research began when she participated in the UCLA Bridge Research Program working on a chlamydial vaccine study and as a student research assistant at the Center for the Study of Latino Health and Culture. Shirley's hobbies include salsa dancing, running and learning how to cook.

Shirley's expectations of the MIRT program is to directly help make change internationally and in her native Peru, and to bring the experiences gained in Peru back to her community in Los Angeles. Shirley hopes that the experiences she gains from her participation in the MIRT program will significantly advance her career goals of becoming a doctor and researcher

"Her dream is to serve as a physician in underserved communities and one day join the team of "Doctors Without Borders" to become involved in medical projects globally "

3 More MIRT 2005 Fellows to be profiled soon.

A Faculty Visit

The MIRT Program hosted a visiting scholar from Addis Ababa University (AAU). Dr. Yemane Berhane, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, is an epidemiologist with extensive research and teaching experience.

During his visit Professor Yemane presented a seminar entitled “Public Health Issues in Ethiopia: Current Status and Prospects” where he addressed the major public health issues in Ethiopia. He also highlighted several avenues of collaborative research training opportunities for UW and AAU faculty & students.

In addition to this he explained the disparities on the level of health care in the rural (85%) and urban (15%) population in Ethiopia. And suggested ideas to bridge the existing gaps. “One of the main solutions” said Dr. Yemane” is to expand the level and capacity of training institutions and to foster research activities”

Dr. Yemane gave highlights about the major activities of AAU’s Butajira Rural Health Project. AAU, is the premier higher learning institution in Ethiopia. The University has over 60 departments in 11 Faculties and 6 research institutes including the Butajira Rural Health Program.

The Butajira Rural Health Program (BRHP) was established as a collaborative program between the Department of Community



Dr. Yemane's Presentation

Health, Faculty of Medicine, AAU and the Division of Epidemiology, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Umea University (Sweden). Since its establishment in 1986, demographic surveillance has been going on within the ten study villages, in addition to various studies that also include other villages of the district. Professor Yemane is Director of the BRHP.

“One of the main solutions is to expand the level and capacity of training institutions and to foster research activities”

During his visit Dr. Yemane has discussed with faculties and staff for possible future collaboration activities. He met with faculty and staff in International Health Program, International Programs and Exchange, Global Health Resource Center and Center for Health Education and Research .

It is expected that MIRT faculty will team with Dr. Yemane and his colleagues, so that together they will develop a multi-purpose research and research training opportunities for future MIRT fellows.



Participants in discussion during Professor Yemane's Presentation

The perfect weather of February proved to be perfectly timed for faculty visits. We were very glad to present Dr. Jim Zhang from Epidemiology Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, National Institutes of Health .

Dr. Zhang presented a scientific research paper entitled “ Fetal Trisomy 21 and Maternal Preeclampsia”. The main objective of the paper was to examine whether trisomy 21 pregnancies have a higher risk of preeclampsia than euploid pregnancies.

Using two population-based databases, the study identified 7763 pregnancies with a singleton trisomy 21-affected fetus and 15,293 matched euploid gestations from the U.S. Natality files for the period 1995-1999. The second database consisted of 665 pregnancies with fetal trisomy 21 and 987 euploid controls in a population-based down syndrome study in California. In the latter study, women were interviewed by telephone regarding characteristics and pregnancy complications. Gestational hypertension and preeclampsia are the outcomes of this study.

Findings from the California study confirmed this association in nulliparous women, and further revealed that the decrease in overall risk of pregnancy-induced hypertension was mainly the result of a large reduction in the risk of preeclampsia rather than in gestational hypertension by itself Neither dataset showed these effects among multiparous pregnancies.

Dr. Jim Zhang at his presentation



In conclusion Dr. Zhang underlined Fetal trisomy 21 is associated with a reduced, rather than increased, risk of preeclampsia, specifically in nulliparous women.

Finally he suggested that future researches need to be carried out.

Dr. Zhang's in-depth and informative presentation stimulated interesting discussions among faculty and students.

Good luck with your future research, Dr. Zhang!



Participants in discussion



Duy Nguyen (MIRT 2000 fellow), second from left with Dr. Sixto Sanchez (far right) and Dos de Mayo staff, Lima, Peru.

Duy Nguyen was senior in department of Biology at UW when he was awarded MIRT fellowship to stay in Lima, Peru in 2000. Dr. Sixto Sanchez, his mentor had Duy work on a “Peer education vs. education by health professionals in changing knowledge, risk perception and risky sexual behavior among teenagers in Lima, Peru “.

Earning his MD in 2004 from Tufts University. Dr. Duy moved to San Antonio where he is now a general surgery resident at UT Health Science.

“I just opened this e-mail and felt a wonderful surprise. I still thought about Lima and Dr. Sanchez after all these years since it's a unique experience to savor and grow from.” This was an email received from Dr. Duy Nguyen, MIRT Alumnus 2000 , after finding about the Spanish Version of their paper being published from his MIRT mentor Dr. Sixto Sanchez two months ago. The title of their paper which is published in Peruvian Journal is “Comparación De La Educación Por Pares Y Por Profesionales .“

“It was a moment of growth, not only through research but also a human experience that can not be replaced”

Dr. Duy Nguyen reflects on his MIRT experience.

“To be lost in another world, a different time and place are moments of great insight of self and of others. This happened in the summer of 2000 between my graduation from the University of Washington and prior to becoming a medical student at Tufts University in Boston. I went to Lima, Peru with the full assistance of the MIRT program under the mentorship of Dr. Sixto Sanchez to conduct research on the impact of peer vs health profession educating risky sexual behavior to adolescents. The way the study was done imparted a personal relationship with the people with whom I was involved.

Peruvian people are warm and welcoming of visitors. At one instance, I was invited to a medical student home where I shared a meal with his family. This richness contrasted greatly to the material and monetary deficit of this country. In addition, the country internal upheaval during the time of former President Fujimori added a distinct flavor to my stay. Sometimes tear gas as well as people marching for their opinion did persuade me to stay in my home and to wait for another day to return to work. It was a time in a place that add to my perspective of the world and its human inhabitants. It was a moment of growth not only through research but also a human experience that can not be replaced.

I am indebted to the MIRT faculty, staff and collaborators for all the support they gave me. I am also indebted to my mentors and staff at Dos de Mayo Hospital in Lima.

ALUMI UPDATE

Let US Know How You're Doing

Do you have an update?

We would love to hear from you!

NAME: _____

UPDATE: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Upcoming Events

Upcoming Seminar

Dr. Nicholas Kintraia, Professor OB/GYN
State of Medical Academy of Republic of
Georgia, OB/GYN Expert, Ministry of Health
of Georgia

"Mother and Newborn Health Care in The Re-
public of Georgia: Reality, Problems and Per-
spectives "

Date: Wednesday March 30, 2005 at 1:30 PM

Place: Health Sciences Building F-348

MIRT 2005 Orientation

May 26-27, 2005

MIRT 2005 Fellows' Expected Departures

- ◆ **Thailand** : July 6, 2005
- ◆ **Peru**: July 6, 2005
- ◆ **Republic of Georgia**: August 1, 2005



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MIRT is a national program designed to encourage students from underrepresented groups to pursue careers in biomedical and behavioral research. This program provides support for undergraduates and graduate students to receive research training in an international setting. Conceived and funded by the Fogarty International Center of the National Institutes for Health, the UW MIRT Program has been developed in collaboration with Dillard University, Xavier University and Western Washington University. The program focuses on population-based health research in developing countries and builds on established linkages with academic institutions in Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Vietnam, Thailand, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Republic of Georgia, Argentina and Brazil.

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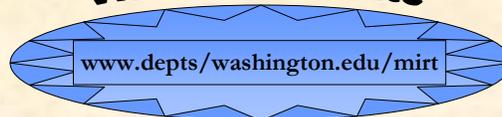


PHOTO QUIZ



This picture was taken by a MIRT Fellow at one of our MIRT sites. Do you know where and when this picture was taken? A special prize will be awarded to the first person providing the correct response. Send your response to mirt@u.washington.edu ** Cheers!**