It is with great pleasure that we introduce our 2011 fellows to the UW MIRT community. The new fellows are eager to begin their fellowships and continue the legacy of the UW MIRT Program in Australia, Ethiopia, and Peru. Hope you enjoy meeting them!

“My long term goal is to become a physician who not only helps her patients but also understands and connects personally and culturally with them. I have always wanted to work in underserved communities and to learn more about epidemiology; the MIRT program has been the opportunity that I have hoped for!” —Tian Xia MIRT 2011 Australia

“My interests are in preventive cardiology and the study of medicine. Furthermore, I am interested in working with underserved population to reduce health disparities in my community here in the US and hopefully, in various places of the globe. “—Lemba Nshisso, MIRT 2011 Ethiopia

“From an early age I have been struck by healthcare disparities and lack of education provided to Americans from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a proud Mexican American, I hope to eventually become a pediatrician focusing on nutritional education so that children can begin their lives with a healthy start.” —Gabriella Puente, MIRT 2011 Peru
Hello! My name is Gabriella Puente and I am a sophomore Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology major at Yale University. From an early age I have been struck by healthcare disparities and lack of education provided to Americans from disadvantaged backgrounds. As a proud Mexican American, I hope to eventually become a pediatrician focusing on nutritional education so that children can begin their lives with a healthy start. Right now I am enjoying college by involving myself in Yale’s Latino Cultural organizations, singing in an A Capella group, and volunteering in the Pediatrics department at Yale New Haven hospital. I also have involved myself in cell biology research for the past few years, but I am eager to delve into a new field of research that I have never explored: Public Health. I am truly grateful and honored by the chance to be a 2011 MIRT Fellow and I am eager to develop public health research skills, enhance my knowledge of statistics, and focus on epidemiology and healthcare at an international location where I can engage in the local culture!

Hola! My name is Andrea Alva, and I was born and raised in Lima, Peru. I moved to the United States when I was fourteen years old in order to pursue my goal of becoming a medical doctor. Currently, I’m a senior majoring in Bio-medicine with a minor in Chemistry. When I am not studying, I like to spend time watching movies and going on road trips with my husband, as well as cooking various Asian dishes. I am interested in the MIRT Program because I believe it will provide me with the opportunity to help people who are in need and the chance to learn about different aspects of public health through research and training. I am incredibly honored to have been chosen as a MIRT fellow, and I am extremely excited for what’s to come this summer! While I believe the program will provide me with insightful research experience, I expect that it will not come without challenges; nevertheless, I am ready to overcome those challenges as I strongly believe that through adversity I will become a better person and eventually a better doctor.

My name is Tian Xia, but people know me as Tina. I am currently a BA/MD student at Rutgers University-UMDNJ and will attend medical school this fall. My long term goal is to become a physician who not only helps her patients but also understands and connects personally and culturally with them. I have conducted research in dermatology and oncology. I have always wanted to work in underserved communities and to learn more about epidemiology; the MIRT program has been the opportunity that I have hoped for! My favorite activities outside of school are swimming, baking, and dancing (oh yes.... and coffee!).
I am extremely happy and honored to be a 2011 MIRT Fellow and am very excited to go to Australia in a few months! This opportunity will teach me more about public health research and other cultures. And this summer will combine my two loves: travelling and learning. Can’t wait to meet new friends and create lasting memories!
Hello MIRT Community!

My name is Diana Trinh and I am excited to go to Australia as a 2011 MIRT fellow. I am currently a fourth year student at the University of Washington, majoring in Public Health. I love spending my free time with my family and friends, exercising, and cooking. I love art in all of its forms and am a super-curious person eager to learn new things about the world we live in. Born Chinese in America, my own family has many traditions that have been passed down for (decades, centuries...), that I enjoy sharing with others. That being said, I also enjoy traveling and experiencing new cultures, and customs as well. After hearing about the MIRT program from a friend who had taken part in the program, I was extremely interested in becoming a part of what she called an amazing experience. As a Public Health major, I look forward to using my classroom knowledge about today’s health issue, how they arise as a population through a political-economical-social perspective, and use this knowledge while in Australia. I feel that by experiencing this firsthand, it will give me a much better perspective, on not only Australia, but here at home in the United States and other countries abroad as well. My plan is to use this perspective to draw upon similarities and differences between the world’s most advanced health systems. Taking a closer look how policies around the world effect the overall health of societies richest as well as impoverished nations. It is my plan to indulge myself into the entire 2011 MIRT program experience, taking advantage of everything Australia has to offer, submerging myself in its country, culture, customs, and lifestyle. I am honored to have this opportunity that will help me both grow personally as well as professionally, and I look forward to sharing my journey upon my return.

Onome’s Personal Statement

Hello! My name is Onome Uwhuba, and I am a sophomore at the University of Chicago. My family emigrated from Nigeria to the United States in 2006, but apart from that monumental move, those two countries encompass my international travel experience and I am very excited to add Australia to my hopefully growing list. I am a Biology major with interests in Global Health and a continuous struggle to remember my French. In my spare time I like to read (a lot) and I am an avid crocheter.

My first solid exposure to public health came with my work for Health Leads, an organization that bridges the gap between medical problems and the socioeconomic factors that are equally great contributors to overall health. Realizing the immense challenges facing healthcare that are unrelated to medical problems specifically is what started my strong interest in Global health.

I plan to go into either primary care Medicine or Global Health. I hope that my experiences in the MIRT program help me confirm my interest in one of these fields.

I hope to learn, understand and utilize epidemiology, public health and field research, and scientific writing. I also hope to meet and talk to interesting individuals in various fields and learn more about the public health issues that Australia faces. And finally I hope to learn more about Australia in general, and expand my view of healthcare around the world. I cannot wait for this summer to begin.
My name is Kelsey Nebeck, and I am a senior at the University of Washington in Bothell majoring in Biology. Aside from college and my part time job at a fitness club, I enjoy spending my free time creating black and white film photography and taking care of my two dogs. One of my life goals is to leave a positive impression on the world, and I see pursuing health related research as a powerful way to accomplish this. I am very excited to have been awarded a MIRT fellowship. Conducting population based research is a new and invaluable skill for me to learn. This opportunity to gain hands on experience examining a public health issue and working face to face with those in need is one I value greatly. I see this as one step toward contributing to the world and fulfilling my goal. While I plan to pursue a career in a healthcare field, am not positive yet on which direction I will take my graduate education. I hope that the MIRT program will help me decide if a career in public health would be right for me.

In addition to the challenge of learning how to conduct population based research, I am very enthusiastic about traveling to Ethiopia. My interest in Ethiopia was greatly incited by a Pacific Science Center exhibit called “Lucy’s Legacy” which described some of the nation’s unique culture and history. I look forward to meeting and working with the people of Ethiopia, experiencing their culture, and learning more about the history and nature of this unique land.

As a current senior at The University of Arizona I’m looking forward to graduation and the start of a developmental biology PhD program at Stanford University this upcoming fall. I have a long standing passion and commitment for biological research and trying to better understand mechanisms that cause disease.

Since taking a global health class at the Med and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health here at U of A, I have developed a strong interest in contributing to the health and welfare of others. Currently, I am very interested in better understanding how public health and biomedical sciences intersect. I’m also thinking about how to get the most out of my graduate school experiences so I can have a career that allows me to contribute to public health. I believe that this experience will help me better understand public health through field research. I’m also excited about traveling to Ethiopia. I have taken an African literature class and discussed in my global health class many public health issues in the East African community. I think being in another country for the summer will be a major learning experience. I can’t wait to arrive in Ethiopia.
Sarita’s Personal Statement

My name is Sarita Sharp. I am a native of Indianapolis, Indiana. Currently I am a junior at Benedict College located in Columbia, South Carolina. Here, I am pursuing a B.S. degree in Biology and a minor in Chemistry. In my free time I take an interest in sports, travel/culture, music and tasting new foods. Academically, I am interested in learning as many different branches of research science as possible through experience. From the UW MIRT program experience, I look forward to meeting a network of other students who are like-minded and have similar interests as myself. I also expect that this program will present challenging research topics for undergraduate students like me. I also believe that the UW MIRT Program will expose me and my team members to a new cultural atmosphere and enriched learning environment. This will give us (students) the chance to broaden our horizons and humble ourselves during this experience.

Lemba’s Personal Statement

Hello, my name is Lemba Dina Nshisso. I completed my undergraduate education at Gardner-Webb University, and I am currently completing a MPH at Case Western Reserve University. I am originally from the Democratic Republic of Congo and now living in Cleveland, OH. My interests are in preventive cardiology and the study of medicine. Furthermore, I am interested in working with underserved population to reduce health disparities in my community here in the US and hopefully, in various places of the globe. I have also an interest in travelling, taking time to discover new cultures and old traditions preserved by people around the world. I am quite excited about undertaking this journey to Ethiopia to complete a research project. I have the opportunity to apply some of the concept that I have been learning in my epidemiology and public health classes and putting my skills into practice. My expectations are to gain knowledge on data management starting from collecting data, performing statistical analysis and writing a scientific paper. Most importantly, I expect to learn about assessing health needs of the community to which I will be assigned and finding solution to improve population health.

Quotes of the Month

“You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you stop to look fear in the face...you must do the thing you think you cannot do.”—Eleanor Roosevelt

“Read not to contradict and confute, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.”—Sir Francis Bacon

“Repetition is the mother of learning, the father of action, which makes it the architect of accomplishment.”—Zig Ziglar
Hi, my name is Tess Lang and I am a fourth year medical student at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Medical School pursuing a career in the field of pediatrics. The summer before graduating from the University of Washington I was able to spend time at the Corporacion De Rehabilitacion Club De Leones Cruz Del Sur in Punta Arenas, Chile. I worked with Alisa Byquist, Dr. Annette Fitzpatrick, Alejandro Yelincic, and Dr. Juan Carlos Velez to perform a observational study of depression in the caregivers of children with disabilities. There, I was very grateful to be introduced to the field of epidemiology, and it has since opened up enormous opportunities for serving my community. I was inspired by Dr. Clarita Barbosa Jabba, a pediatrician that serves the community with a selfless, knowledgeable, and energetic nature as well as the devotion of the social workers that I accompanied on home visits. I was further moved by the dedicated love that parents showed their children while bringing them into the clinic despite financial and transportation difficulties. Schooling was provided for the children that attended the clinic and it prepared them to be able to independently work in an artistic trade. The teachers saw the beauty and believed in the high potential of every child that they worked with. Results from our study showed that elderly caregivers for the children suffered the most from depression, and with this knowledge, efforts could be made to improve their access to resources. Understanding the socioeconomic barriers that contributed towards health disparities in Chile motivated me to pursue further research efforts focused on how health disparities arise and why they persist.

The year after graduating from the University of Washington with a degree in neurobiology I was fortunate to be accepted into the National Institutes of Health Academy, a year-long postbaccaulaureate biomedical research program with a focus on domestic health disparities. I carried out a molecular biology project to better understand the protein trafficking dysregulation that occurs in Gaucher’s Disease, a lysosomal storage disorder that has neurological symptoms and disproportionately affects certain populations with a genetic predisposition. Milder forms of Gaucher’s disease affect adults but certain mutations affect infants severely and the treatment has raised many ethical concerns due to the high cost of treatment. The protein aggregating characteristics of Gaucher Disease led me to work on Huntington’s Disease at UCSF. The summer before entering medical school, I did research in the Muchowski lab, and the following summer I applied the lab techniques toward a basic science research project on Alzheimer’s disease.

During this project, I became more aware of the clinical presentation and treatment of Alzheimer’s disease. I pursued leadership roles within geriatrics throughout my first two years of medical school and co-led the Geriatrics Interest Group. My third year rotations shed light on the similarities that exist among geriatrics and pediatrics populations, as they both have some dependence on caregivers and benefit from health advocacy. My clinical and past extracurricular experiences confirmed my interest in pediatrics and preventative care. Introduced to epidemiology by my MIRT experience, I was fortunate to apply those skills for a year between my 3rd and 4th years of medical school. I conducted a study in pediatric neurology focused on understanding risk factors for cerebral palsy among Asian Americans in California. I now seek to address health issues in underserved populations and work closely with families as they raise their children. Additionally, I would like to continue doing clinical research centered on understanding how health disparities arise and affect pediatric populations. In the coming year, I am looking forward to travelling to India to carry out a project at a boarding school for HIV-infected children in Bangalore. I am incredibly grateful for the MIRT program. It has set the foundation of working internationally and has prepared me to serve my community in a very meaningful way.
Objective: We sought to determine which measures of adiposity can predict cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk and to evaluate the extent to which overall and abdominal adiposity are associated with cardiometabolic risk factors among working adults in Ethiopia.

Methods: This was a cross-sectional study of 1,853 individuals (1,125 men, 728 women) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The World Health Organization STEPwise approach was used to collect sociodemographic data, anthropometric measurements, and blood samples among study subjects. Fasting blood glucose (FBG) and lipid concentrations were measured using standard approaches. Spearman’s rank correlation, receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves, and logistic regression were employed to determine the association and predictive ability (with respect to CVD risk factors) of four measures of adiposity: BMI, waist circumference (WC), waist-to-hip ratio (WHR), and waist-to-height ratio (WHtR).

Results: Overall, FBG is best associated with WHtR in men and WC in women. Systolic blood pressure (SBP) is most strongly associated with BMI in men, but with WC in women. Compared to those with low BMI and low WC, the risk of having CVD is the highest for those with high BMI and high WC and those with high WC and low BMI. Review of ROC curves indicated that WC is the best predictor of CVD risk among study subjects.

Conclusion: Findings from our study underscore the feasibility and face validity of using simple measures of central and overall adiposity in identifying CVD risk in resource-poor settings.

Objective: To evaluate the cross-sectional relationship between migraine and pregravid obesity; and to assess the risk of adult weight gain among women with history of a pediatric diagnosis of migraine.

Background: Obesity, comorbid with pain disorders including migraine, shares common pathophysiological characteristics including systemic inflammation, and derangements in adipose-tissue derived cytokines. Despite biochemical and epidemiological commonalities, obesity–migraine associations have been inconsistently observed.

Methods: A cohort of 3733 women was interviewed during early pregnancy. We ascertained participants' self-reported history of physician-diagnosed migraine and collected self-reported information about pregravid weight, adult height, and net weight change from age 18 to the 3-months period before pregnancy. Using pregravid body mass index, we categorized participants as follows: lean (<18.5 kg/m²), normal (18.5-24.9 kg/m²), overweight (25-29.9 kg/m²), obese (30-34.9 kg/m²), severely obese (35-39.9 kg/m²), and morbidly obese (≥40 kg/m²). Logistic regression procedures were used to estimate odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (CIs).

Results: After adjusting for confounders, relative to normal weight women, obese women had a 1.48-fold increased odds of migraine (OR = 1.48; 95% CI 1.12-1.96). Severely obese (OR = 2.07; 95% CI 1.27-3.39) and morbidly obese (OR = 2.75; 95% CI 1.60-4.70) had the highest odds of migraines. Women with a history of diagnosed pediatric migraine had a 1.67-fold higher odds of gaining ≥10.0 kg above their weight at age 18, as compared with non-migraineurs (OR = 1.67; 95% CI 1.13-2.47).

Conclusion: These data support earlier observations of migraine–obesity association among women, and extend the literature to include evidence of adult weight gain among women with a history of pediatric migraine.
Earlier this month the UW MIRT 2010 fellows presented their MIRT research findings at the Society for Prevention Research (SPR) meeting in Washington, DC. The SPR is an international meeting with a mission of advancing scientific investigation on the etiology and prevention of social, physical and mental health, and academic problems and on the translation of that information to promote health and well being. The theme this year was “Prevention Scientists Promoting Global Health: Emerging Visions for Today and Tomorrow.” We are proud of you all!

I to r: Sonia, Wint, Alvin, Stefanie, Jolana, Kristen, and Kaylee

Let Us Know How You’re Doing
Do you have an update or new photo to share with us?
We would love to hear from you!

NAME:_______________________________________________________________

UPDATE:_____________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________

E-mail Address:______________________________________________________

NB: We have made it easier for our alumni to make updates directly online. Please go to the MIRT Web Page www.depts.washington.edu/mirt and click on the Alumni Update.
The UW MIRT is a national program designed to encourage students 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. The UWMIRT is funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) and Fogarty International Center (FIC) of the National Institutes of 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 Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Thailand, Republic of Georgia, Australia, Peru, Mexico, Ecuador, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina.

Striving to Eliminate Health Disparities

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Photo Quiz

He was a Mexican-American labor leader who used non-violent methods to fight for the rights of migrant farm workers in the southwestern US. His work for the fair treatment of farm workers changed the lives of millions of people for the better. His motto in life-"si se puede" (it can be done)-embodies the uncommon and invaluable legacy he left for the world's benefit. For more than three decades he led the first successful farm workers union in American history, achieving dignity, respect, fair wages, medical coverage, pension benefits, and humane living conditions, as well as other rights and protections for hundreds of thousands of farm workers. A strong believer in the principles of nonviolence practiced by Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., he effectively employed peaceful tactics such as fasts, boycotts, strikes, and pilgrimages. In 1968 he fasted for 25 days to affirm his personal commitment and that of the farm labor movement to non-violence. He fasted again for 25 days in 1972, and in 1988, at the age of 61, he endured a 36-day "Fast for Life" to highlight the harmful impact of pesticides on farm workers and their children.

The significance and impact of his life transcends any one cause or struggle. He was a unique and humble leader, in addition to being a great humanitarian and communicator who influenced and inspired millions of Americans to seek social justice and civil rights for the poor and disenfranchised in our society.

Who is this remarkable human rights hero?

A special prize will be awarded to the first person providing the correct response. Send your response to mirt@u.washington.edu. **** Cheers!