"Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."— Ralph Waldo Emerson

MEET THE 2014 HSPH MIRT PROGRAM FELLOWS

The HSPH MIRT Program faculty and staff hosted a two day pre-travel orientation program on May 15 and 16 at HSPH campus to welcome the 2014 fellows

“Through this experience, I am eager to fully immerse myself in Ethiopia, enhance my statistical skills and develop fulfilling friendships with other members of my cohort. I am excited to travel to a country rich in history alongside ambitious scholars who are committed to transforming the global health landscape.” — Isabel Morgan, MIRT 2014 Ethiopia

“Through the HSPH MIRT program, it is my hope and aim to collaborate with students and faculty of a similar drive to conduct population research on disease incidence, as well as hopefully let it be the inception of what I plan to do as a future public health official.” — Johan Garcia, MIRT 2014 Peru

“By participating in the HSPH MIRT program, I hope to gain more research experience, broaden my understanding of global health issues, and expand my cultural literacy.” — Parirash Abdolhosseini, MIRT 2014 New Zealand
MEET HSPH MIRT 2014 FELLOWS

It is with great pleasure that we introduce our HSPH MIRT (MHIRT) 2014 fellows to the MIRT Program community. The new cohort of fellows come from nine universities and colleges around the country. Hope you’ll enjoy meeting them!

Isabel Morgan
Undergraduate, Mount Holyoke College
MIRT site: Ethiopia

Isabel’s Personal Statement

Hi! My name is Isabel Morgan and I recently graduated from Mount Holyoke College with a degree in Anthropology and Culture, Health and Science. I graduated a semester early to use this time to gain additional experience working in a public health organization. Currently, I volunteer at Partners In Health where I serve as an administrative support staff for the front office. I also assist my mentor at HSPH prepare manuscripts for publication. In the fall, I will enroll in an MPH/MSPH program in Epidemiology/Maternal and Child Health. (I am in the process of deciding between schools). My long-term goals include pursuing an MD-PhD and addressing health inequities that influence adverse birth outcomes in under-resourced communities. Through this experience, I am eager to fully immerse myself in Ethiopia, enhance my statistical skills and develop fulfilling friendships with other members of my cohort. I am excited to travel to a country rich in history alongside ambitious scholars who are committed to transforming the global health landscape. Further, I view the MIRT program as an opportunity to challenge myself and I welcome the growth in intellect and humility that will surely follow.

Francisco Eguia
Undergraduate, Rice U
MIRT site: Ethiopia

Francisco’s Personal Statement

Hello, I am Francisco Eguia. I was born in Santiago, Chile, but certain circumstances have allowed me to call Miami, FL, Scarsdale, NY, and Harlingen, TX home. I will be starting my senior year at Rice University in Fall 2014 and earning degrees in chemistry, psychology, and biochemistry/cell biology in Spring 2015. My goals are to become a physician, and to strive to become a better person each day. I enjoy running, playing tennis, baking with my mother, giving back to the community, and spending time with loved ones. I also enjoy trying new foods. My interest in the HSPH MIRT fellowship was sparked by experiences I was lacking rather than by those I already had. I have extensive experience with chemical and biological lab work. However, it is my strong belief that a physician is part of the bridge that connects the sciences to the humanities. Although I have volunteered countless hours in several organizations, I am yet to apply scientific principles to problems directly affecting a population. I am eager to learn, and become a part of research done directly within a population through MIRT. I am also incredibly excited to immerse myself in the Ethiopian culture, to meet people with different stories to tell, and to bond with my group, which I am sure is made up of outstanding people.

“Knowledge without wisdom is like water in the sand.” — Guinean proverb
Jenny Fung
Undergraduate, Harvard U
MIRT site: Peru

My name is Jenny Fung. I am a sophomore at Harvard University, pursuing a joint concentration in History of Science and Anthropology. I was born in the United States, but lived in Venezuela until I was seven. Last summer, I spent several months in Chile, shadowing doctors and learning about the public health system. That experience helped me to better understand global public health and motivated me to find ways to address health inequities. I am very excited to go back to South America this summer and conduct public health research in Peru through the MIRT program. Aside from gaining research skills, I would like to experience Peruvian culture and build relationships with local community members. I love to work with children and enjoy teaching them new skills. In my free time, I teach kids about the science of cooking and performance arts. I also like to run, dance, try new foods, and visit museums.

Ornella Rutagarama
Undergraduate, Rochester Institute of Technology
MIRT site: Ethiopia

Hi everyone! My name is Ornella Rutagarama and I am a junior at Rochester Institute of Technology. As a refugee from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a person who has lived in dismal conditions in the United States, I am well aware of the disparities in health that groups of people around the world face. My experiences are the driving force behind my desire to receive a dual MD/MPH degree. I wish to make a positive impact in the world. Through the MIRT program, I will be able to immerse myself in Ethiopian culture and develop my skills as a future researcher and health care professional. My wish is to take the knowledge that I gain this summer and use it to better the various communities that I am a part of. During my free time, I enjoy organizing events for the Organization of African Students, a cultural club on my campus, volunteering at a local refugee outreach program in the city of Rochester, and participating in Latin dance competitions. I am really excited for my journey this summer and cannot wait to share my experiences!

“I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear.” — Nelson Mandela

“Excellence is never an accident. It is always the result of high intention, sincere effort, and intelligent execution; it represents the wise choice of many alternatives - choice, not chance, determines your destiny.” — Aristotle
Hi everyone! My name is Jayne Rice. I am a sophomore Biochemistry major, math minor at Spelman College. I love playing and watching sports. I love to play basketball and tennis in my free time. I plan on going to medical school and becoming a surgeon. I would like to incorporate clinical research in my practice. My ultimate goal is to be able to serve in under-privileged communities in the United States and around the world. I also plan to advocate for equity in healthcare and for the elimination of health disparities. Through the MIRT program, I look forward to embracing a new culture while continuing to be exposed to another field of research. This will be my first public health and clinical research experience. By going to Peru, I hope to improve my Spanish speaking skills. I feel very blessed to have this opportunity to study aboard and look forward to growing as a student, researcher, and person.

¡Saludos! My name is Johan Garcia Padilla and I am a senior at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Virginia, majoring in Spanish, Latin American, and premedical studies. As a candidate for an MPH in health policy and management next year, it is my hope to study the interventionist policies and mechanisms wherewith institutions of government and healthcare can work together to curb the prevalence of chronic illnesses. I have had the opportunity to work in many areas of public health both domestically and abroad. In Latin America, I worked through the National Autonomous University of Mexico researching the successes and failures of a local health project conducted by the same university and supervised by the city government. In the Dominican Republic, I assisted in basic epidemiological and clinical endeavors. As a highlight of my experiences, I was placed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in California conducting county-level research on chronic diseases in Los Angeles. Through the HSPH MIRT program, it is my hope and aim to collaborate with students and faculty of a similar drive to conduct population-research on disease incidence, as well as hopefully let it be the inception of what I plan to do as a future public health official.

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and Third by experience, which is the bitterest.” — Confucius
**Chantel’s Personal Statement**

Hello all! I’m Chantel Bonner, a junior at Xavier University of Louisiana. At Xavier, I am involved in various programs. I most recently became involved with the study abroad office. Here, I have the opportunity to help fellow classmates broaden their horizons and gain a more fulfilling college experience. I am also a member of the Foreign Language Club, Mi pasión es español, and this club allows me to expand my knowledge of Spanish and other international cultures. I was born and raised in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Growing up as an African American in the South and being a witness to the effects of hurricane Katrina have given me glimpses of how far our society has come and how much farther it has to go to overcome nationwide and global disparities. It is my desire to aid in the effort to combat these disparities as both a physician and a scientist. This goal has led me to seek an M.D./Ph.D degree. The MIRT program will give me a solid foundation in global research training that I can carry with me to complete this goal. It will also move me one step closer to my dream of having a career in international medicine.

“Making your mark on the world is hard. If it were easy, everybody would do it. But it’s not. It takes patience, it takes commitment, and it comes with plenty of failure along the way. The real test is not whether you avoid this failure, because you won’t. It’s whether you let it harden or shame you into inaction, or whether you learn from it, whether you choose to persevere.”
—President Barack Obama

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**Parirash’s Personal Statement**

Hi! My name is Parirash Abdolhosseini and I am currently a junior at the University of Washington majoring in Psychology as well as completing pre-medicine requirements. I first began doing research during my freshman year where I investigated the genetic connection between Epilepsy and Autism Spectrum Disorder. This research sparked my interest in the comorbidity of neurological disorders and how communities across the world address issues involving mental health. Eventually I would like to get an MD/PhD and focus on mental health in inner-city/rural populations. In my free time, I also enjoy hiking, hot yoga, volunteering at my local food bank, and playing soccer and basketball. This summer, I am excited to experience another country in a way that will expand my understanding of different cultures. By participating in the HSPH MIRT program, I hope to gain more research experience, broaden my understanding of global health issues, and expand my cultural literacy.
Hello all! My name is Alexandra Montano and I am a senior at the University of Washington in Seattle studying public health and nutritional sciences. I will be graduating in June and in the fall, I will be heading to graduate school where I hope to obtain an MPH in epidemiology with a focus on international health and nutrition, and then to eventually go on to obtain my PhD. My interest in research stemmed from two projects I was involved with during my time at UW. For the last two years, I have been working in a lab in the Center for Emerging and Re-Emerging Diseases on a project examining drug resistance in a cohort of HIV-2 infected Senegalese patients. I also worked with the Center for Public Health Nutrition to assess a program called “Fresh Bucks,” an incentive program that doubles the purchasing power for low-income Seattle residents who use their federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at farmer’s markets. I am excited to apply the public health and research experience that I have obtained thus far while experiencing a new culture and expanding my knowledge of public health research. As I begin my transition from undergraduate to graduate student, I know that the MIRT fellowship will be a tremendous opportunity for me to grow as a student, researcher, friend, and colleague. I am so grateful for the opportunity to spend the summer in New Zealand and I cannot wait to start my journey and this new chapter in my life!

Hello all! My name is Yves-Yvette Young and I'm a senior psychology major, public health sciences minor at Xavier University of Louisiana. I'll be graduating in May and starting my master’s degree in public health this fall. I realized during my sophomore year that Public Health was my passion and that my research could make a difference in the lives of youth around the world. My primary research interests revolve around the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents. Once I complete my master’s and doctoral degrees, I want to research and design reproductive health programs for youth, both domestically and globally. Eventually, I imagine myself working for the WHO or being the director of the reproductive health division of the CDC. I want youth all around the world to be aware of their sexual and reproductive health, so that they can make informed decisions to ensure healthier lives. This summer, I hope to gain first-hand global health research experience. I want to immerse myself in the culture of New Zealand and really learn about the health disparities that youth may be facing there. I know that my current research skills will be honed and new research skills will be developed. The MIRT program is placing me in a position to actualize my future career goals of being involved with global health issues and I am beyond grateful and excited for this opportunity! I can’t wait to take off in June and start researching across the globe.

Alexandra Montano
Undergraduate, U of Washington
MIRT site: New Zealand

Yves-Yvette Young
Undergraduate, Xavier U
MIRT site: New Zealand
A two day pre-travel orientation program was held on May 15 and 16 at the Harvard School of Public Health campus to welcome the new 2014 HSPH MIRT fellows and prepare them for their fellowship experience. This annual pre-travel orientation is designed to prepare trainees for their research attachments globally. It provides opportunities to meet and network with fellow MIRT-ies and program faculty, get important information on travel health, ethical conduct of human research, travel safety and cultural competency while gaining hands on skills necessary for conducting epidemiologic research.

As always, thank you so much to all who participated in making the orientation a great success! Below we share highlights of the orientation.

Dr. Edward Ryan, Professor at Harvard Medical School and Director of Tropical Medicine, Division of Infection Disease at Mass General Hospital shared his expertise on travel health

Dr. Michelle A. Williams, Professor and Chair of Department of Epidemiology shared the two-decade history of the MIRT Program

Karlotta Rosebaugh, MIRT Program Advisory Board Member and Director of Health Sciences Minority Students at University of Washington provided a lecture on Cultural Competency

Dr. Mahlet Tadesse, Associate Professor of Biostatistics at Georgetown University and Adjunct Associate Professor of Epidemiology at HSPH taught fellows Introduction to Epidemiology and Biostatistics

Stanley Estime and Alyssa Speier, QA/QI Education Specialists at HSPH Office of Human Research Administration provided fellows with a lecture and led case study discussions on ethical conduct of human subjects research

Zach Jones, Manager of International Safety and Security Program, Harvard Global Support Services advised fellows about travel safety

Thank you!
Every year MIRT/MHIRT fellows and faculty work on diverse research projects that address the needs of the communities of each site. In the Science Corner we provide synopses of study findings from selected sites. In this issue, we present two studies from MIRT 2013 in Thailand and Ethiopia. Please visit the MIRT Program website to read the complete list of abstracts.

**Circadian rhythm characteristics, poor sleep quality, daytime sleepiness and common psychiatric disorders among Thai college students**


**Introduction:** To investigate the relationship between common psychiatric disorders (CPDs) and sleep characteristics (evening chronotype, poor sleep quality and daytime sleepiness) among Thai college students.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted among 2,970 undergraduate students in Thailand. Students were asked to complete a self administered questionnaire that collected information about lifestyle and demographic characteristics. The Horne and Ostberg Morningness–Eveningness Questionnaire (MEQ), Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI) and Epworth Sleepiness Scale (ESS) were used to evaluate circadian preference, sleep quality and daytime sleepiness, respectively. The General Health Questionnaire-12 (GHQ-12) was used to evaluate presence of CPDs. Logistic regression models were used to estimate adjusted odds ratios (ORs) and 95% confidence intervals (95% CIs) of CPDs in relation to the covariates of interest.

**Results:** A total of 337 students were classified as having CPDs (11.2%; 95% CI 10.1–12.3%). Evening chronotype (OR = 3.35; 95% CI 2.09–5.37), poor sleep quality (OR = 4.89; 95% CI 3.66–6.54) and excessive daytime sleepiness (OR = 1.95; 95% CI 1.54–2.47) were statistically significantly associated with CPDs.

**Discussion:** Our study demonstrated that CPDs are common among Thai college students. Further, evening chronotype, poor sleep quality and excessive daytime sleepiness were strongly associated with increased risk of CPDs. These findings highlight the importance of educating students and school administrators about the importance of sleep and their impact on mental health.

**School-based intervention: evaluating the role of water, latrines and hygiene education on trachoma and intestinal parasitic infections in Ethiopia**

*Bizu Gelaye, Abera Kumie, Nigusu Aboset, Yemane Berhane and Michelle A. Williams*

**Objective:** we sought to evaluate the impact of a hygiene and sanitation intervention program among schoolchildren to control active trachoma and intestinal parasitic infections.

**Methods:** This longitudinal epidemiologic study was conducted among 630 students in rural Ethiopia. Baseline and follow-up surveys were conducted to evaluate the impact of a three-pronged intervention program: (i) construction of ventilated improved pit latrines; (ii) provision of clean drinking water; and (iii) hygiene education. Socio-demographic information was collected using a structured questionnaire. Presence of trachoma and intestinal parasitic infections were evaluated using standard procedures.

**Results:** At baseline, 15% of students had active trachoma, while 6.7% of them were found to have active trachoma post intervention (p <0.001). Similar improvements were noted for parasitic infections. At baseline, 7% of students were reported to have helminthic infections and 30.2% protozoa infections. However, only 4% of students had any helminthic infection and 13.4% (p <0.001) of them were found to have any protozoa infection during follow-up surveys. Improvements were also noted in students' knowledge and attitudes towards hygiene and sanitation.

**Conclusion:** In summary, the results of our study demonstrated that provision of a comprehensive and targeted sanitation intervention program was successful in reducing the burden of trachoma and intestinal parasitic infection among schoolchildren.
A renowned author, activist, educator, performer, poet, and producer, some of Maya Angelou’s notable accomplishments include over 50 honorary degrees, being the first female African American street car conductor in San Francisco, being the first African American woman with a screenplay that was filmed, a National Medal of Arts and a Presidential Medal of Freedom. However, Maya Angelou’s early life was wrought with many difficulties. Her extraordinary journey is one of overcoming adversities and using one’s life story and talents to uplift and enrich the lives of others.

Born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1928, her parents divorced when she was young. They sent her and her brother to live with their paternal grandmother in Arkansas. There, young Maya experienced racial discrimination that was engrained within the socio-cultural structure, but she also gained tremendous wisdom and values from her extended family. When she was 7, her father took the children to live with their mother in St. Louis. While there, Maya was raped by her mother’s boyfriend. She told her brother, who then informed adults in the family. Later, when Maya found out that the rapist was killed, she stopped talking for five years, as she felt responsible for the man’s death.

During this period of silence, Maya and her brother were sent back to Arkansas where she had a teacher who introduced her to works by authors like Dickens, Shakespeare and Poe. Maya developed a love for books, and listened and observed everything around her. Maya credits her teacher with helping her to speak again. When Maya was about 14, she and her brother were sent to their mother, who now lived in California. At age 17, Maya gave birth to a son, shortly after completing high school. To support her son, she worked several jobs including waitress, cook, nightclub dancer, and sex worker.

In the early 1950s, Maya married and began performing as a singer. The marriage ended a few years later, although her career thrived. She toured Europe, studied different forms of dance with renowned teachers in New York and appeared on television. She even recorded her first album, Calypso Lady in 1957. Towards the end of the 1950s, she became involved with the civil rights movement, working as the northern coordinator for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr’s invitation. She fell in love with South African activist Vusumzi Make, and in 1960, the couple and Angelou’s son, moved to Cairo. Subsequently, she worked in Ghana as a journalist and educator.

In the mid-60s, she returned to the States with plans of helping Malcolm X build the Organization of African American Unity. However, Malcolm X was assassinated soon after. Angelou remained involved in the civil rights movement. After Martin Luther King Jr.’s was killed in 1968, Maya found comfort in writing. Her good friend, James Baldwin, provided her with a lot of encouragement while she wrote. In 1969, her first and most famous autobiographical work “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” (1969) was published. It was on the New York Times best-seller list for two years and has sold millions of copies. Afterwards, she published several other autobiographical books. In the 1970s, she re-married, but divorced some years after. She appeared in many theatrical and television productions including in the mini-series “Roots.” “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings” was adapted into a movie which aired on television in 1979.

From 1982, until her death in May 2014, Maya was a Professor at Wake Forest University in North Carolina. She was 86 years old. Among many things, Maya will be remembered for her remarkable contributions to literature and the arts and for her work in promoting peace, civil rights and equality. Even after her death, Maya Angelou continues to inspire many to see that one’s fate is not necessarily determined by surrounding circumstances, but more importantly, by how one chooses to respond.
Health Disparities Facts

- In the period 2006-2010, preterm birth rate for black infants declined 8% to the lowest level ever reported (17.1%). Despite this decline, the 2010 preterm rate for black infants was about 60% higher than that for white (10.8%) and Asian/Pacific Islander (10.7%) infants.
- In the period 1999-2008, life expectancy and expected years of life free of activity limitations caused by chronic conditions were greater for females than males, and for whites than for blacks.
- Work-related death rates are highest among Hispanics, men and individuals born outside the US.
- Rates of premature death (i.e. death before age 75 years) from stroke and coronary heart disease are higher among non-Hispanic blacks than among whites.
- In 2010, about 40% of Hispanic adults and 25% of non-Hispanic black adults were uninsured.
- While remarkable strides have been made in reducing rates of cigarette smoking in the United States, the rates of progress of reducing cigarette smoking among individuals of low socioeconomic status has been much slower.
- Preventable hospitalization rates were higher for low-income individuals compared to high-income counterparts. Furthermore, rates of preventable hospitalization were higher for non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics compared to non-Hispanics during 2001 to 2009.
- Unemployment rates were much higher among minorities (i.e. blacks, Hispanics and American Indian/Alaska Natives) than among whites in 2006 and 2010. Moreover, unemployed adults are less likely to report their health as excellent or very good.
- Although there has been general declines in rates of tuberculosis cases among all racial/ethnic minority groups from 2006 to 2010, rates remained higher for minorities than for whites in 2010.

From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Health Disparities and Inequalities Report—2013

Alumni Update

Do you have an update?

We want to highlight your professional accomplishments and personal milestones.

Help us keep you informed and let us know how you’re doing!

Please contact Bizu Gelaye via email (hsphmirt@gmail.com).

We would love to hear from you!
MIRT/MHIRT is a national program designed to encourage students to pursue careers in biomedical and behavioral research. The program provides support for undergraduates and graduate students to receive research training in an international setting. MIRT is funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) of the National Institutes of Health. The HSPH MIRT (formerly UW MIRT) Program was originally developed in collaboration with Dillard University, Xavier University, and Western Washington University. The program focuses on population-based health research globally and builds on established linkages with academic institutions in Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Vietnam, Thailand, Republic of Georgia, Australia, New Zealand, Chile, Peru, and Mexico.