



WORKING TO ELIMINATE MINORITY HEALTH DISPARITIES IN NEW YORK'S SMALL CITIES

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CEMHD Health Disparities Research Fellows takes Cuba and China



Graduate student in UAlbany's School of Public Health and CEMHD Health Disparities fellow, **Wayne Lawrence**, was selected to participate as a visiting scholar in Guangdong, China this summer. He spent a total of ten weeks examining different aspects of human health research. Wayne, a Dr.PH in Epidemiology candidate, is at Sun Yassin University's School of Public Health, investigating the effects of air pollution on adverse cardiovascular health, mental health, and birth outcomes. "My experience thus far has already been memorable," Wayne said. "I just had the opportunity to meet and discuss my research with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention deputy director. Though I've been in Guangdong for only a few weeks, I can already say this has been a rewarding opportunity both academically and culturally."

Wayne is supported through a partnership between the host institutes and UAlbany's Center for Global Health, which has placed students in China, Panama, Uganda and Sierra Leon this summer. He was also part of an environmental health sciences team led by Shao Lin, a School of Public Health professor and the Center for Global Health's associate director for global health research. Lin has published multiple papers investigating environmental risk factors in Guangdong, and is leading various research projects with both Guangdong Cardiovascular

Institute and Sun Yat-Sen University. She's trained Wayne with core research skills for the last two semesters. "Building a bridge between the western and eastern culture, and conducting global health research is my dream," Lin said. "I have helped build up collaborative agreements between UAlbany's School of Public Health and six Chinese universities/institutes. I find our students learn more when they explore and live in different cultures. By researching in China, our students can apply what they've learned in the classroom and help solve real public health challenges."

Melissa E. Noel traveled to Holguin, Cuba from June 12 - June 26th on a mission trip. Scarce resources have taken a drastic toll on Cuba's living conditions. Many Cubans lack healthy food provisions and supplies of tissue, soap, and toothpaste. Melissa helped to host outreach programs, distribute personal care items, conduct health presentations, and build a long-lasting fellowship with the community. Melissa also traveled to Montreal, Quebec, Canada for the American Sociological Association 112th Annual Conference between August 12 - August 15th. The conference's theme, Culture, Inequalities, and Social Inclusion Across the Globe, included a number of sessions that addressed current political, social, and health developments in the United States and abroad. Here, Melissa is pictured after attending a session entitled, "Social Psychological Approaches to Examining Health Disparities."



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FELLOWS' NEWS

Wayne Lawrence has been selected as 2017-18 fellows for the American Public Health Association's (APHA) maternal and child health (MCH) section.

Yajaira Tineo Cabrera won **1st prize** for a paper at the meetings of the American Psychological Association

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Recipients of Albany's Health Disparities Research Training Fellowships: 2017

Katheryn Roberson (right) grew up in Harlem, New York. She currently works as a mental health therapist in an outpatient center in the South Bronx. She completed her Masters of Education and Masters of Arts at Teachers College, Columbia University. It was at Teachers College that she realized the role of research in producing knowledge and promoting system-level change. She co-authored an article published by *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, a journal of the American Psychological Association. The research presented in the article focused on how race-based traumatic stress, coupled with racial identity, impacts general mental health outcomes for People of Color. Through her own experiences, as well as those of the clients she works with, it became evident that there are both physical and mental health concerns associated with being a Person of Color. Although these health concerns were often apparent, less apparent was the preventability of these disparities.

Ms. Roberson hopes to address health disparities through her doctoral studies at the University at Albany's Counseling Psychology Ph.D. program, under the mentorship of Dr. Alex Pieterse. Her research goals are to develop the body of knowledge around racial discrimination and its impact on health, and to identify methods of responding to, and reducing, health disparities associated with racism. She would also like to address racial disparities through identifying factors that maintain racial prejudice, and how racial discrimination can be interrupted. Ms. Roberson believes that through these two avenues, intervention strategies can be created to promote health and reduce disparity, and prevention strategies can be developed to dismantle factors contributing to disparities.

Through the Presidential Doctoral Fellowship for Research Training in Health Disparities, Ms. Roberson hopes to inform her clinical work, become a more proficient researcher, and contribute to the growing research aiding in the dissolution of health disparities. She also wishes to engage with the community and ensure that research traverses the walls of academia to make meaningful impacts on the community.

Hnin Wai Lwin Myo (left) was born in Burma (Myanmar). She graduated from Myanmar's University of Medicine (II) 1999. Ms. Myo has been a medical doctor and public health specialist for over 16 years. Her work has centered on epidemiological research on communicable diseases. Her attention to matters of public health led to her earning her master's degree in public health and tropical medicine in 2005.

Dr. Myo has worked in a variety of capacities within the healthcare system, including Research Officer and District Health Officer of the Yangon Region, and Assistant Director of the Ministry of Health. Additionally, she was a national survey coordinator for the Disease Control Department's National Tuberculosis Control program, which emphasized the presence of health disparities, particularly in military conflict zones.

Her experiences and research interests led her to prioritize public health issues among minority groups as a Deputy Project Manager of the Mobile Medical Services Project. Dr. Myo proposed a project focused on providing basic healthcare to socially marginalized ethnic minority groups along the underserved Thai-Myanmar border, necessitating considerable funding from the Japanese Nippon Foundation. Her mission was to narrow the wide gap between perceived healthcare coverage and reality characterized by the absence of resources resulting from long-term mismanagement in the conflict zone and insufficient knowledge of the population. Dr. Myo became so closely watched by Junta agents that she and her husband, a physician, and military commander, faced being court martialed in the context of the political conflict regarding the Kachin ethnic group. They fled from Myanmar to seek asylum and have resettled here in Albany, NY.

Upon resettlement, Dr. Myo immediately began contributing to her new community through volunteering for the United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants and Trinity Alliance's Refugee Community Health Partnership Program. As a doctoral student at the University at Albany's School of Public Health, Dr. Myo wishes to pursue her dream of being an infectious disease epidemiologist; Dr. Phil Nasca will be acting as her academic advisor. Dr. Myo plans to continue her efforts in addressing health disparities, helping disadvantaged populations "no matter wherever or whoever they are."

Research for the Community



AIMS: Albany Infant and Mother Study. Allison Appleton, Ph.D., Principal Investigator. Gestation is one of the most critical periods of development where maternal social experiences and aspects of the environment may influence child health for year to come. The Albany Infant and Mother Study (AIMS) was designed to identify biologic and epigenetic mechanisms that may help explain how psychological factors and environmental toxicants in the prenatal period may jointly shape disparities in infant health outcomes. Our study blends expertise in epidemiology, obstetrics, psychology, environmental health, and epigenetics to advance the science of health disparities and identify novel risk and resiliency factors among disadvantaged populations. The study began in June of 2015 and data collection is ongoing. A total of 300 mother and infant pairs are sought for the study. AIMS enrolls women between the ages of 18-40 with singleton pregnancies who are between 24-28 weeks gestation at an outpatient obstetrics clinic at Albany Medical Center (Albany, NY). For more information about AIMS please go to <http://www.albany.edu/aims/index.php>

FAST FACTS

Trends in Incidence and Prevalence of Diagnosed Diabetes among Adults Aged 20-79, United States, 1980-2014

