Global Health Takes Center-Stage

The ongoing West African Ebola outbreak has focused international attention on global health and the significant disparities between healthcare systems worldwide. Among the many healthcare workers who choose to travel abroad and use their knowledge, experience and skills to help improve health outcomes in other countries are Wildcat Nurses.

As Homecoming approaches, a time when we celebrate the opportunity to come “home” to Tucson and reconnect with our former classmates and faculty, we wanted to highlight just a few of our outstanding students and alumni who are studying about or working to improve health care around the world.

We hope to see you for Homecoming in November! Please feel free to contact me with comments, questions or suggestions - jshaver@email.arizona.edu.

Students Study Abroad in South Africa

This summer through the University of Arizona, nursing student Brittany Abeln and pre-nursing student Mackenzie Flaherty participated in the Geography of Health and Development Summer Study Abroad Program.

Focused on what geography can bring to the study of health and how geography has been used to help understand disease patterns, access to health care, health inequality and the impact of the environment on health, students traveled to South Africa and Swaziland for five weeks, making stops in Pretoria, Metsimediba, Thornybush, Graskop and Ermelo.

During the trip, they blogged about their experiences - see http://geoginafrica.class.arizona.edu/. In her last post, Brittany wrote: “I’ve had such an amazing experience and I feel so lucky to have been able to go on this trip.”
Since becoming a registered nurse in 1978, Heidi McGuigan, DNP, FNP-C, FSHP, has worked in many areas of nursing: family practice, urgent care, school health and community health. However, her current position as a medical officer for the U.S. Department of State is unlike any position she has ever held.

In June, Dr. McGuigan (DNP ’11) completed a two-year assignment at the U.S. Embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone, providing primary, preventative and urgent care to American diplomats and their families.

“Tropical diseases have been new and exciting challenges for me,” said Dr. McGuigan. “My very first patient had malaria. I also encountered cholera, typhoid fever and monkey pox, which are very different diseases from what you normally see in the United States.”

Dr. McGuigan also provided occupational health services for Sierra Leonean embassy employees and conducted local community outreach through diplomacy and education. She is particularly proud of offering the first-ever critical care nursing course in Sierra Leone.

“Nursing in Sierra Leone is very poor,” said Dr. McGuigan. “The capacity really needs to be built. A lot of people die because they don’t have good nursing care.”

We wish Dr. McGuigan all the best on her new assignment in Skopje, Macedonia, which she started in August. Contact her at heidi53@sbcglobal.net.

Brooke Wright, RN, a pediatric ICU nurse from Utah and a first-year Doctor of Nursing Practice student, dreams of one day opening a clinic in Africa. In the past two years, Brooke has traveled to India, Africa and Paraguay with Operation Smile, an international medical charity that performs surgeries to repair cleft lip, cleft palate and other facial deformities in children around the globe. Brooke says the experience has been life-changing.

“Kids and teens walk in with a bandana over their face,” Brooke said. “They’ve been shunned by their communities and feel hopeless. But when they come out of surgery and you give them a mirror, and they smile for probably the first time in their lives, you know that from that day forward, their lives are completely changed.”

In addition to her humanitarian trips with Operation Smile, in 2013, as part of the Human Resources for Health Program, Brooke spent six-and-a-half months in Rwanda teaching pediatric nursing. While in Rwanda, she applied to the DNP online program at the UA, impressed by the faculty’s expertise in rural and global health. Although her background is in pediatrics, Brooke chose the Family Nurse Practitioner specialty so that she can care for the whole family. In December, she’ll return to Africa on her fourth medical mission.

“Well, you’re working 16- to 17-hour days, but in the end, you know you’ve just changed somebody’s life,” she said. “The love these people give to you is indescribable, and that’s why I do it.”

Contact her at brookewright@email.arizona.edu.
In August, when PhD student Pedro N. Oblea, Jr., MS, BSN, RN, traveled from Converse, Texas to Basel, Switzerland to attend the Institute of Nursing Science Summer School, he wasn’t sure how he would measure up against his peers. Since returning home from the five-day course focused on developing behavioral interventions for older adults, he feels more confident than ever.

“I felt like I was ahead of my peers when it comes to my PhD education,” said Pedro, who was awarded a ThinkSwiss travel grant to help cover travel and accommodation costs. “For me, it was confirmation of how well-prepared I am becoming through my studies.”

A major in the Army Nurse Corps, Pedro’s dissertation is focused on the effects of short-term separation on the behavioral health of military wives, with an emphasis on depression.

“I’ve been deployed twice overseas, and my wife and I are separated at least three times a year, varying from a week to 13 months,” said Pedro. “There is a lot of research about the effect of long-term separation on depression, but there is very little about short-term separation.” Contact him at oblea@email.arizona.edu.

New Online CNE Course

Motivational interviewing is an advanced communication technique that is focused on identifying readiness for change, encouraging and supporting a person’s self-assessment, formulating and implementing a plan for change, and facilitating ongoing course corrections necessary to maintain change long-term.

This new, interactive, online Continuing Education course is designed for professionals working with individuals and groups who want to make changes in their lives. Motivational interviewing is often used to support:

- Smoking cessation
- Increased exercise & movement
- Medication adherence
- Dietary modifications
- Recovery from addiction
- Wellness enhancement

RNs, counselors and social workers can earn 8 contact hours during this flexible, online, asynchronous course. For more information, please visit http://cne.nursing.arizona.edu/motivational-interviewing/

Community Conference

Compassionate Conversations about End-of-Life Care

Join nationally renowned speaker Roshi Joan Halifax, PhD, and other local experts as they explore how we can provide compassionate care of the dying at a community conference on Nov. 14 at St. Philip’s in the Hills Episcopal Church, 4440 N. Campbell Ave.

Dr. Halifax will be the morning keynote speaker, and through workshops attendees will explore topics of grief and bereavement, palliative care and advance directives. Dr. Halifax is a Buddhist teacher, Zen priest, anthropologist and pioneer in the field of end-of-life care. She is Founder, Abbot, and Head Teacher of Upaya Institute and Zen Center in Santa Fe, NM, and received her PhD in medical anthropology in 1973.

This one-day conference is presented by Casa de la Luz Foundation, Carondelet Hospice & Palliative Care and TMC Hospice. The event is open to health-care professionals and individuals who are interested in learning about end-of-life care. The registration fee is $55, which includes breakfast, lunch and continuing education credits. Registration closes on Oct. 31. To register, go to www.tucsonhospiceconference.eventbrite.com.

RN Patient Advocate Learning Intensive

In Their Own Words

Ishmail Sillah, MEPN '14

“Nursing continually challenges me to reveal new ways in which I can make meaningful and positive healthcare contributions both locally and internationally.”

At age 13, Ishmail came to the U.S. as a refugee from Sierra Leone.

Have You Seen Our New Website?

We recently updated the look of the College of Nursing website. Check it out, and while you're there: update your contact info, send us photos and let us know what's new with you!

Keeping Cool with the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge: On Sept. 3, Dean Joan Shaver and Assistant Professor Jane Carrington completed the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge from Dean Shane C. Burgess at the UA College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. They challenged colleagues at the NAU School of Nursing and the UA College of Pharmacy. Watch the video at http://bit.ly/UACON_ALS.

Be Social With Us!  Share what’s happening in your life on our social media sites.