

Global Institute for Health and Human Rights



Newsletter

January- February

The world within reach- A look into the High- Level AIDS Consultation in Turkey

"I think it's so important for researchers to understand the culture before anything. Because if you don't get that then you're not going to be successful."

-Katie Waye, GIHHR Student Assistant

Arash Alaei, M.D.



UNIVERSITY
AT ALBANY

ABOUT THE GIHHR



CONTACT US

University at Albany

1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222 USA

Business Administration
Room 365

PH: (518) 442- 2586
PH: (518) 442- 2582
FAX: (518) 442 - 2582

gihhr@albany.edu
uagihhr@gmail.com
www.gihhr.org

 @AGIHHR
 facebook.com/GIHHR

The Global Institute for Health and Human Rights founded in 2013 by physicians and renowned human rights activists Kamair and Arash Alaei, aims to facilitate a deeper understanding of the intersection between health and human rights, with concentration on reproductive health, maternal and child care, HIV/AIDS prevention and Harm Reduction. The approach of health as a human right is not widely accepted, even among many ministries, secretariats of health, civil society, and organizations representing the interests of the most vulnerable.

There is inadequate collaboration among individuals working in the field of medicine and those working from a legal or policy perspective to protect human rights, and little understanding of how their work is connected. Here at GIHHR we aim to promote an equally rich and multi-disciplinary approach to the understanding of and solutions to the health and human rights challenges of our contemporary world. Through research, education, policy, advocacy and development, the GIHHR seeks to develop innovative solutions to contemporary challenges in this arena.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

February 26th

Mount Sinai School of Medicine Lecture

Presentation on HIV/AIDS and Rights to Health

March 2

Undergraduate Information Session and Forum

GIHHR Research Opportunities and Intern Guest Speaker

(3:00-4:30PM in Campus Center Assembly Hall)

April 2016

Visiting Scholar from the City University of Hong Kong

July 17-22

21st International Aids Conference

Durban, South Africa



香港城市大學
City University
of Hong Kong



GRANTS

GRANTED

HEALTH LAW GRANT

The Health Law Project incorporates the work from expert law faculty to provide an international context of the Right to Health and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights into specific Middle Eastern curriculum. The project works with distinguished faculty from University at Albany, Albany Law School, University of South California, Oxford University, and University of Virginia who are experts within their fields. The multifaceted project hopes to not only provide students with knowledge regarding International Health Law but also the ability for application and mentorship for top students.

UP FOR SUBMISSION

WHITE PAPER – GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL DIPLOMACY: AIR POLLUTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Kamiar Alaei, MD; Arash Alaei, MD; David Carpenter, MD; Everett Joseph, PhD; Global Institute for Health and Human Rights

The goal of the initiative is to improve environmental conditions in various Middle Eastern countries that suffer from an exceedingly arid climate. The populations of these countries are particularly prone to airborne infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia as well as increased rates of hospitalization and death due to the extremely poor air quality in these regions.

Once it receives enough funding, this project will work to design programs and systems to detect dust levels and create advisory warnings for citizens.

Integrated Community Health Empowerment (ICHE) Program: Democracy, Human rights, and Rule of Law in Kurdistan, Iraq.

Iraq University Linkages Program- Hawler Medical University Research and Advocacy on women's health and violence against women.

Planning long term care for those aging with HIV/AIDS: do any of the disability scales measure up?

Recruiting Bilingual Faculty to Develop and Deliver Multiple Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) in Arabic.

Request for Online Teaching and Learning Proposals- New round of development of online teaching and blended learning programs.

TURKEY CONFERENCE

One of the main projects GIHHR accomplished in 2016 thus far was the co-sponsoring of the Second High Level Consultation on HIV-Aids in Conservative Social Settings which took place in Istanbul, Turkey over the weekend of January 30-31. Partnering with the international Aids Society-the world's largest association of HIV professionals-GIHHR organized the consultation which consisted of representatives from over 15 countries coming together to discuss new approaches to the prevention and treatment of HIV-AIDS in the Middle East. GIHHR directors Dr. Kamiar Alaei and Dr. Arash Alaei travelled to Istanbul along with GIHHR intern Katie Waye to carry out the consultation, which they all agreed was exceedingly successful.

"HIV is increasing in the Middle East," said Kamiar Alaei. "There's a lot of social stigma due to culture, religion, and the opinions of policy makers, and the most affected populations are target populations such as women, prisoners, sex workers, IV drug users, and msm (men who have sex with men)."

Most of the countries in the region are strongly influenced by the Muslim faith, which creates what professionals call a conservative social setting. Therefore, there's a great deal of stigma associated with HIV-AIDS since it's considered to be a sin under the laws of Islam.

"The Middle Eastern view on HIV is that it's a sex related disease and that it's a disease that occurs because you did something bad. That's how they view it as," said Waye. "Religiously speaking it's almost like the wrath of God. Like, you deserve it because you got intoxicated by the drug, had extramarital affairs, or engaged in homosexuality, which is also not looked upon well."

However, there were numerous religious leaders at the consultation who offered various directions for treating those who are infected.

"Regardless if they are sex workers, msm, prisoners, IV users, if they got sick there are a lot of sentences in this religion that say we have to protect them and take care of them," said Kamiar Alaei. "We realized even in Islam there are a lot of opportunities that can be applied to increase the access of treatment to these populations."

According to Waye, two of the religious leaders who attended, Judge Mohammad and Professor Mohammad, are both well-known for their beliefs and studies on religion and how it impacts the treatment of HIV-AIDS.



"They discussed how religiously speaking, these people who have HIV did something wrong and that is a sin in their views, but that we still have to accept that these are people who have a disease and in Muslim faith you should always treat people who need help with the help they need. They said you have to overlook that bias—that cultural practice that says you did something wrong and see that they need help," said Waye.

Although consulting religious leaders may seem like an obvious approach to dealing with the issue, Arash Alaei explained that communication between people of different disciplines has been lacking up until now.

"It was new for us to approach and ask them for direction. In the past we had a lack of communication with religious leaders," said Arash Alaei. "In the past we only had medical and scientific ideas. Now based on this meeting we discussed with other disciplines to learn how they can give us direction. We need to have more and more interdisciplinary meetings. We need to be inclusive to have new ideas and people to come to these discussions. Not to continue discussion between people who have been in communication for several years."

Bringing together all of these people from different backgrounds was a key point of the event and Kamiar Alaei was thrilled to see "that almost everyone agreed that we have to do something for these special populations."



Another interesting component that all three of them agreed was vital to the success of the event was that it wasn't just a series of lectures. After speakers would conclude their presentations on various topics such as HIV and religious settings, HIV and drug users, and HIV and homosexuality, attendees were divided into small groups to have "breakout sessions" to discuss each topic. This gave every participant the opportunity to speak and share their experiences, allowing exponentially more collaboration than there would've been with solely lectures.

"When we had discussions with religious leaders, their comments, feedback and suggestions were so important," said Arash Alaei. "When we asked them [for help] they found ways because they know the language."

Another exciting result of the consultation was that the GIHHR received funding from OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) to continue with HIV-AIDS research in the region.

"This is the first time a university got funding from OPEC and we are glad that we were qualified. The key point is that it's good to have funding from the region to do work on the most denied topics in the region. The main donors from OPEC are from those countries. It shows how policy makers indirectly endorse the work that we want to do," said Kamiar Alaei.



Kamiar Alaei

He said that by receiving funding from them, and by working with the International Aids Society, it gives GIHHR's work more credibility, allowing us to spread our reach and hopefully receive even more funding in the future.

Whereas the last consultation took place in Europe in 2011 and was comprised mostly of UN agencies, this conference was in the affected region and almost entirely consisted of countries from the region.

"This is from the region, funded by the region, with experts from the region, for the region, in the region," said Kamiar Alaei.

This upcoming July, GIHHR will be hosting a panel at the International Aids Conference in Durban, South Africa. The IAC is the world's largest gathering to discuss the issue of HIV-AIDS and GIHHR is highly anticipating the opportunity to share our findings from the Turkey consultation with over 20,000 people.

In the meantime, Arash and Kamiar Alaei will be continuing their HIV-AIDS research at the GIHHR, using the important lessons learned and information gathered from the consultation. Rather than sitting on the information they're going to keep moving forward because there's still so much work to be done.

"It's not enough to say now we have only access to services. We need to have quality as well. We need to look at the quality as well as the access and availability," said Arash Alaei.

Waye, who had been studying HIV-AIDS in the Middle East for over two years prior to the trip, had this important takeaway from the experience.

"I think it's so important for researchers to understand the culture before anything. Because if you don't get that then you're not going to be successful."

GIHHR PANELS

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES

THE Global Institute for Health and Human Rights hosted a panel discussion event on October 12th in the Campus Center of SUNY Albany Uptown campus. The panel discussion, “The Right of Health for Syrian Refugees,” was part of the “Symposium of the Syrian Crisis” co-sponsored by Albany Medical College and SUNY Albany School of Public Health. The event held at SUNY uptown campus was very fortunate to have: Dean Nasca from the School of Public Health, Dr. Russ Altone from the Department of Health Policy, Dr. Mahmoud Aldyab who is a physician from Syria & Visiting Scholar at the GIHHR, and Mrs. Susannah Sirkin from Physicians for Human Rights. The panelists presented the following topics: health/medical issues among Syrian refugees, the firsthand perspective about the access of healthcare for Syrian Refugees, and the punishment by the Syrian Government to health providers helping refugees. The event ended with the audience creating a great discussion for about 30 minutes.

On October 12th the Global Institute for Health and Human Rights was honored to have hosted a panel discussion in the Campus Center of the University at Albany’s Uptown campus. The panel discussion, “The Right of Health for Syrian Refugees,” was a part of the “Symposium of the Syrian Crisis” co-sponsored by Albany Medical College and SUNY Albany School of Public Health. The event held on the Universities uptown campus was very fortunate to have: Dean Nasca from the School of Public Health, Dr. Russ Altone from the Department of Health Policy, Dr. Mahmoud Aldyab who is a physician from Syria & Visiting Scholar at the GIHHR, and Mrs. Susannah Sirkin from Physicians from Human Rights. The panelists presented the following topics: health-care for Syrian Refugee, and the punishment by the Syrian Government to health providers helping refugees.



STAFF FEATURE



JOE JUAN may be the first GIHHR student to serve as a guest researcher at CDC, Atlanta. Graduated from Harvard School of Public Health, one of the well-known programs in the field of global health, Joe commits himself to research examining how adverse life experiences and intergenerational force may shape children's trajectory to substance abuse, emotional disturbances, and delinquency. At first glance, you might find a hard time figuring out that our scholarly Joe, a PhD student in our School of Criminal Justice, is also a forensic psychiatrist in Taiwan. Bestowed with the national scholarship for Criminology provided by the Ministry of Education in Taiwan, Joe moves forward to the next chapter of his life: dedicating himself to discovering important protective factors that improve the lives and health of vulnerable populations.

Joe is an interesting person capable of multitasking. He can conduct research, analyze data, help build international relationships, write grant proposals. In the meantime, he is a friendly "consultant" helping other interns deal with challenging work, finding easy solutions to multiple complex tasks. Surprisingly, he also has

a keen eye on art, and that explains why he can amuse us by making promo videos with a slight touch of Photoshop and 3D animation.

"Working with our interns and Dr. Alaei in GIHHR is one of the most wonderful experiences in my life," says Joe with a sincere look. In addition to his diligent study, Joe enjoys the process of translating invisible knowledge into tangible practice. "GIHHR is such a magic place that you don't have to wait until graduation or getting an advanced degree to start helping people." As many of us, Joe feels very privileged that he can work with so many scholars and students in GIHHR to address critical social issues such as substance abuse, HIV epidemics, and health disparities.

"I used to have four cats along with a bunny rabbit, and I know how to keep things nice and clean," says Joe with a bright smile in his face. We have no doubt on his statement. So next time when you see our "professional" Joe immersing himself in paper writing, data analyzing, quick texting, and session discussion, please feel free to drop by and say hello. Very likely, he would share with you some tips of conducting your very first research that you could hardly learn unless getting into the graduate school. And most importantly, he knows the secrets of how to make the most of your internship. We are glad to have Joe with us in GIHHR.



INTERN STORIES

NATALINA IAMARINO

Natalina

Iamarino is a recent graduate from SUNY Albany. During her undergraduate career Natalina double majored in Globalization Studies and Geography and double minored in Business and Criminal Justice. With a life-long passion for global affairs, her specific interests include health and human rights, sanitation and water rights.



Natalina worked as an intern and research assistant to the Institute in the fall 2015 semester. At the Institute Natalina worked alongside fellow interns on an environmental project that will launch to mid-career professionals in the Middle East. The project focuses on building leadership skills, protecting environmental sustainability and maintaining safe health practices in the work place. Specifically, Natalina had been transcribing lecture material, aiding in organization and website build-up as well as performing editorial assistance. In conjunction with the environmental project, Natalina joined a project designed to accommodate a week long instructional and learning visit with a handful of Iraqi scholars. Her role in that project is to help plan and execute the objectives of the week as well as facilitate a smooth arrival and participation of the visiting members.

Outside of her studies, Natalina's most recent research focuses on longevity patterns, specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. Her senior thesis, *The Other End of the Spectrum: Living to 85+*, discussed the societal pressures due to Japan's large and aging population.

Natalina is currently the NYC Advocacy Intern for the United Nations Association of the USA, a program of the United Nations Foundation. Working with the Director of Education Initiatives, Natalina is working to expand the Model United Nations program to underprivileged children around the country. In the fall Natalina aims to pursue a Masters in International Affairs and aspires to work with UN affiliated programs, promoting multilateral diplomacy.

"My experience at GIHHR has propelled me into a directed and focused path of awareness. I will use my experience at the Institute to help further my understanding of international relations towards my higher education, but also in my personal life as well. In the future I hope to gain internship experience at the United Nations Population Fund!"

AMANDA VOLK

is a senior Public Health major and biology minor in the Honors College at the University at Albany. She is from Niskayuna, New York. She has been an intern at the GIHHR since May of 2015. At the GIHHR she has worked on various projects. Over the summer she researched in areas such as breast cancer in Afghanistan and HIV/AIDS in women of the Middle East. She also acted as an assistant to the President of Bahcesehire University (Istanbul, Turkey) during his visit to UAlbany in August. Currently she is assisting on a project investigating the role of social sanctions, laws, and stigma on people living with HIV/AIDS in Turkey, Kazakhstan, and Malaysia. This project focuses on risk groups such as injection drug users, MSM, and sex workers. She has also assisted in the making of multiple grant budget proposals. Amanda is active in the school community beyond the GIHHR.

Throughout her time as an undergraduate she has participated in various public health oriented organizations. As an executive board member of Students for Health and Human Rights she has worked to increase the student body awareness of various public health and human rights issues around the world along with increase the general cultural competency on campus. She has recently taken on the role of Vice-President for the newly formed UAlbany chapter of New York State Public Health Association (NYSPHA) and is hoping to help in the growth of this organization at the university. Amanda has represented the university as a Purple & Gold student ambassador at since October of 2014.

After graduating in May she is hoping to go on to study for a Masters of Public Health in Epidemiology. She likes that epidemiology is the intersection of science, math, and preventative medicine. She is interested in environmental epidemiology that focuses on maternal, child, and reproductive health and is looking forward to a career in epidemiology.



GIHHR ALUMNI

GRAD SCHOOL ASPIRATIONS

Katie Waye- Accepted to Tufts University and NYU College of Global Public Health and Brown University. She plans to receive a Master's in Public Health with a concentration of Health Policy and Management.

Christina Ehret- Accepted to Boston University, Pittsburgh University, University at Albany, and George Washington University. She plans to receive a Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology.

Amanda Volk- Accepted to Emory University, Drexel University, Pittsburgh University, NYU College of Global Public Health, University at Albany. She plans to receive a Master's in Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology.

Morgan DeVuyst- Attending SUNY Upstate Medical College's Physician Assistant Program.

ACCEPTED PROGRAMS

Natalie Turner - GIHHR intern recently accepted into the Amgen Scholar Program at the National Institute of Health.

The Amgen Scholars Program at NIH is a partnership between the Amgen Foundation, the Foundation for the NIH, GIHHR intern Natalie Turner had the honor of being accepted into one of the most prestigious scholarly health program on the East Coast. The Amgen Scholars Program at NIH (National Institutes of Health) in Bethesda, Maryland is where Natalie will be spending her summer, working side-by-side with world renowned scientists to do health disparities research. We are very proud for her, as she is the only UAlbany student to be accepted into the program.

September Johnson - GIHHR Intern Coordinator, who recently had the honor of being accepted into the CDC Undergraduate Public Health Scholars program working with Maternal Child Health Careers / Research Initiatives for Student Enhancement-Undergraduate Program (MCHC/RISE-UP). She will be working with the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Johns Hopkins University doing research and advocacy work surrounding health disparities this summer in Baltimore, MD. September is one of 50 students selected nationwide to participate in this program.

AMERICORPS

Kaitlyn Paige



PEACE CORPS

Carlos Sosa - Nicaragua

Ben Kramer - Malawi



AWARENESS OF GENDER INEQUALITIES: LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

{ University at Albany, State University of New York }
33rd Annual

SEXUALITY MONTH *Celebrating Diversity and Creativity*

February 1-18, 2016

Workshops, Discussions, Exhibits, Theater Performances, Films, and More

On February 16th, the Global Institute for Health and Human Rights hosted “Awareness of Gender Inequities, Locally and Globally.” This event was a panel discussion that was presented as a part of the University at Albany 2016 Sexuality Month, a campus-wide event that is hosted by the Middle Earth Peer Assistance Program and Counseling and Psychological Services. Hosted by our GIHHR Intern Coordinator, September Johnson, this event featured Professor Sarah Rogerson from Albany Law School and Dr. Dina Refki, the Executive Director of the Center for Women in Government and Civil Society. Our panelists discussed various topics affecting women, including women’s health, women in leadership positions, and problems facing immigrant women. This discussion increased awareness of specific issues that women face while also giving the guests a chance to speak to experts in the field who can share certain opinions and perspectives about these issues. Availability and accessibility were often cited as holding women back in society and the cycle of poverty’s effect on women was also a reoccurring theme throughout the discussion. A huge thank you to the interns to who helped plan and coordinate this discussion. Joe Walsh, September Johnson, and Fabian Bramwell dedicated their time and effort to make sure this was the successful event that it turned out to be.

OUR STAFF

STAFF

Kamiar Alaei
Arash Alaei
Alexandra Harrington
Joe Shau- Chiu
Mahnaz Alaei
Peyman Sigaroudi



INTERN COORDINATORS

September Johnson
Christina Ehret

STUDENT ASSISTANTS

Victoria Rodriguez
Peymen Sigaroudi
Katherine Waye
Rachel Eager
Morgan Devuyst
Sarah Leitner
Sarah Heath
Natalie Turner
Sharareh Biglari
Elmira Pashaei
Michelle DeOcampo
Shervin Shahidizandi

INTERNS

Amanda Volk
Frank Rizzo
Rajanie Bhudeo
Josh Cucueco
Joseph Walsh
Sue Jean Kim
Lindsey Riback
Tzu- Hsuan
Wen- Pu Cheng
Matt Engert
Nicolas Engert
Fabian Bramwell
Weg Fong Chao
Pei- Pei Kou
Andrew Kou
Cristina Liriano Cepin
Nawshin Ahmed
Amal Meer
Housana Rasouly
Kaeley Stout
Brandon Batch
Sarah Valis
Dana Cochrane

Jessica Bellon
Eno- Obong
Mishka Woodley
Hedayat Ghazali
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Emily Lipton
Emily Shchultz
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Eli Enis



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