

University of Global Health Equity - A New Way of Institutional Higher Education

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Partners In Health (PIH) has been delivering health care and social services in some of the most underserved communities in many countries for 30 years (PIH, 2019). We work closely with local governments and communities to design and deliver public health programs. Realizing the importance of the long term sustainability of these programs, PIH has established many training and research programs in collaborations with academic partners in order to build local capacity. The need to institutionalize these training programs has become obvious. Based on this premise, the University of Global Health Equity (UGHE) was founded in 2015.

UGHE represents a natural extension of PIH's mission to strengthen health systems and change the way health care is delivered around the world. UGHE inspires to be an innovative, world-class education institution that would train global health professionals - clinicians, researchers, and public health and policy experts - into leaders and change makers.

The Master of Science in Global Health Delivery (MGHD), our flagship program at UGHE, is designed to provide a one-of-a-kind learning experience for students (UGHE, 2019). During the program, students gain a profound understanding of the realities of problem-solving and the challenges of delivering care in under-resourced settings. They also acquire the diverse skill set, complete with leadership and management training that are critical to successfully empowering teams to respond to the complex health challenges of our time. Recognizing the co-dependency between people, animals, plants, and the environment, MGHD encourages students to address health issues from a collaborative and multi-disciplinary One Health (WHO 2019) approach.

The program emphasizes on cultivating knowledge as well as fostering practical application. A key component of the MGHD program is the Practicum. Practicum provides students hands-on experience in research design, implementation, management, analysis, and results dissemination, further preparing them for their futures as global health leaders and practitioners. The practicum is designed to teach students how to understand and then address real world problems scientifically, strategically, and collaboratively using evidence-based methods that they have learned throughout the program.

UGHE is proud to showcase some examples of our students' projects in this special issue. The papers present a set of diverse projects that demonstrate the impact our students had made in Rwanda during their tenure at UGHE. This includes improving artificial insemination success rate in cattle, assessing sharp disposal practices among people living with diabetes, identifying undiagnosed hypertension in the community and utilizing technology to reduce loss to follow ups. These projects demonstrate the feasibility of implementing meaningful interventions to generate concrete outcomes without substantial additional resources.

The papers we present in this special issue not only serve as evidence of the commitment of our faculty in education, but also the commitment of UGHE in becoming the leading education and research institute in Rwanda and in Africa. Our students are equally committed to both their learning and to the communities they serve. Since inauguration, MGHD has enrolled four cohorts of students from over 13 countries. All continue to actively engage in the University's activities, many have joined us as faculty. Recognizing that their commitment to social justice extends beyond the time spent in the classroom, our graduates established the UGHE Alumni Association in 2017 with a mission to continue to use the skills they have acquired at UGHE to solve real-world problems. Current students also actively participate in various community services to strengthen their relationship with the people they have committed to serve, to understand the needs of the underserved, and to immerse themselves in the local culture. We are looking forward to seeing them publish more of their work and share their success stories with the global health community in the future.

References

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