Since 2012, the Center has been expanding international education opportunities for medical students and residents, collaborating with global partners on strategic research and capacity building programs, and working with our partners to improve health in 65 countries around the world. In 2014–2015, the Center launched several new programs, including the Global Surgery Initiative, and a multidisciplinary Southern Africa Initiative in Malawi, Mozambique, and South Africa.

Medical students are at the heart of the Center for World Health. Agatha Offorjebe, a first-year student in the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, had the opportunity to interview Dr. Thomas J. Coates, the Center’s Director, and learn more about the Center’s accomplishments and his vision for the future.

2014–2015 was a very busy year for the Center for World Health. What do you feel were some of the Center’s key achievements?

We had noteworthy achievements in 2014–2015, both here and abroad.

I am very proud of the fact that former Dean A. Eugene Washington and Mrs. Washington traveled to meet our partners in South Africa, Mozambique, and Ethiopia, and that he pledged resources to expand and extend our collaborations in southern Africa. We are reaching out to partners in this region to build even deeper and more sustainable collaborations. For example, we are working with universities in South Africa to bring research and educational opportunities to the Eastern Cape, a region of South Africa that is very poor and has very bad health outcomes.

With resources provided by the Dean’s Office, we are developing new research opportunities in the areas of cancer, cardiovascular disease, mental health, and substance abuse, and we are providing opportunities for junior faculty from South Africa to come to UCLA to develop collaborations for future research opportunities. Our working relationships in Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America also deepened over the last year.

We also have expanded and improved our offerings for UCLA medical students and residents. More than 30 percent of this year’s class took the Global Health Selective course, and participation in Global Health Awareness Week was tremendous. More residency programs are offering international electives, and we want to continue to build on these successes so that all of the residency programs have strong global health, clinical, and research opportunities.
What was the initial inspiration for the Center for World Health, and how did this year’s activities meet the goals of its founders?

The initial inspiration came from medical students like you. When I started at UCLA in 2003, I was very focused on my research projects in South Africa, Peru, and China. With the support of the Dean’s Office, we then launched a program in Malawi, and that took substantial time as well. During this time, I was approached by several medical students interested in global health, and I started to host discussion groups at my house. Associate Dean Lee Miller, UCLA infectious disease physician Risa Hoffman, and I then came up with the idea of a global health education program, at the urging of the medical students. Dean Washington gave us two years of pilot funding for this program. At the same time, UCLA Health had been working on creating an international medicine program under the guidance of Dr. Thomas Rosenthal, who is now Co-Director of the UCLA Center for World Health.

Dean Washington brought Dr. Rosenthal and me together and expressed the need for there to be one integrated program that brought together the assets of the medical school and UCLA Health. He appointed an extremely talented faculty committee, we came up with a plan, the Dean’s Office and UCLA Health funded it, and that got us started. That was two-and-a-half years ago, and we’ve been working hard on it ever since.

In your opinion, what is the Center for World Health’s role in addressing today’s most pressing global health challenges?

The motto of the Center for World Health is “Saving Lives and Improving Health by Investing in People.” That’s what we want to do. We want to invest in everyone at UCLA, especially the students, to become the world health leaders of the future. We want to invest in our partners around the world so that they can become leaders as well. Together, we and our partners can bring about a new generation of enlightened leaders to advance world health and reduce disparities.

Given that the Center for World Health’s motto is “Saving Lives and Improving Health by Investing in People,” what is the Center doing right now with regard to this?

We invest in our UCLA students, residents, fellows, faculty, and staff. We provide clinical, research, and classroom opportunities so that everyone understands what world health is, the major priorities that need to be addressed, and the most effective ways for advancing world health. We invest in our partners to build capacity around the world.

The world needs excellent clinicians, skilled scientists, and opportunities for top-notch education to make a difference. UCLA can’t solve all of the world’s problems, but we can work with people around the world to develop the skills they need to solve problems where they live. We can train them to do the science necessary to understand how best to improve health locally. We can partner with them to educate their next generation of leaders, and we can strive toward clinical excellence for everyone, everywhere.

Our next goals involve working with our partners in southern Africa, Latin America, and Asia to deepen our partnerships and to work with those partners to become regional resource leaders for other institutions in their countries and regions. We want to make sure that our partner centers around the world are able to provide excellent teaching, science, and clinical care. Together with our partners, we then want to reach out to build capacity within other institutions around the world. This multiplier effect can enhance health all over the world.
Learning from our neighbors

The number of UCLA medical students receiving credit for the Global Health Selective course nearly doubled from 2013 to 2014, illustrating the growing interest in global health. This surge in interest has also translated to a greater number of students participating in research and clinical electives in global health settings.

55
Students received credit for the Global Health Selective course, consisting of lectures and roundtables with global health practitioners and films with global health panelists

27
Medical students participated in the Global Health Pathway by taking on leadership positions for the various global health activities hosted at the Center and working on scholarly or community-based projects in global health

18
Senior medical students traveled to seven countries (China, India, Malawi, Mozambique, Peru, South Africa, and Thailand) for clinical training

15
Medical students traveled to ten countries (Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa, and Vietnam) between their first and second years for global health research projects

HIGHLIGHT

The Center for World Health has developed a unique bilateral relationship with Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (UEM) School of Medicine in Mozambique, where UCLA pediatric surgeons, Drs. Lee Miller and Daniel DeUgarte, have established partnerships with faculty leadership at Maputo Central Hospital, the country’s primary teaching hospital. Each year, we send several UCLA medical students and residents to Maputo for research and clinical training, and UCLA also trains two to three Mozambican pediatric nurses or resident physicians each year at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center.

PATHWAY STUDENT HIGHLIGHT

2015 MD candidate and Global Health Pathway student, Hannah Shull, published an article in the September 2014 issue of The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene analyzing the global health clinical elective in Malawi, where Shull completed a clinical elective in April 2015. She also carried out a global health research project in Lima, Peru, after her first year of medical school, and she was one of the student leaders of both the Global Health Selective and UCLA’s Global Health Awareness Week during her second year of medical school.
UCLA is a world-renowned training facility for medical students and residents, as well as for international physicians and trainees who come to UCLA for clinical observerships. Such observerships are valuable opportunities during which visitors and hosts learn from each other. The Center for World Health helps to connect visiting foreign physicians with host departments at UCLA and facilitates the application and onboarding process.

HIGHLIGHT
UCLA has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Republic of Macedonia, through the Macedonian Prime Minister, Nikola Gruevski, creating a formal mechanism whereby Macedonian physicians from a variety of specialties can participate in clinical observerships at UCLA.

Physicians from Macedonia have expressed their appreciation for the training they receive.

“I want to thank you for your strong professional support and permanent availability during my observership period at Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center. Dr. Igor Barjaktarevic’s professional engagement was crucial to my learning about patient management in UCLA’s medical intensive care unit.”

— Dr. Zorica Nanovikj, MD
Serving those in need

In 2014–2015, faculty from the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA traveled to partner countries, including Armenia, Brazil, China, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, and Tanzania, to engage in clinical care delivery and provide services to underserved areas, and to build the capacity of health care providers to deliver world-class care.

HIGHLIGHT

The Center for World Health’s Global Surgery Initiative was launched in 2014, bringing together UCLA surgical faculty and departments to collaborate, share ideas, and maximize the impact of surgical programs in countries around the world.

These partnerships provide important educational opportunities for UCLA medical students and surgical residents. They also enable global surgical research and capacity building initiatives to address important health problems that surgical interventions can help to improve.

As part of this initiative, the Pediatric Surgical Training Program in Mozambique, under the direction of Dr. Daniel DeUgarte, is having a dramatic and sustainable impact on the pediatric surgical care provided there, and on the ongoing education of the next generation of surgeons in the country.
Advancing global research

In 2014–2015, the UCLA Center for World Health launched new collaborations, as well as continued to work with existing partner institutions around the world on innovative interdisciplinary research. Together, we address the most pressing health issues facing the world, including infectious diseases such as HIV, as well as the growing epidemics of noncommunicable diseases such as cancer and heart disease.

HIGHLIGHT

Following the visit of former Dean A. Eugene Washington to southern Africa in 2014, the UCLA Center for World Health launched the southern Africa Initiative. This initiative formalizes and strengthens relationships with existing partners in the region, including the University of Cape Town and Stellenbosch University (South Africa), Universidade Eduardo Mondlane (Mozambique), and Partners in Hope (Malawi), and also reaches out to new institutional collaborators. These relationships, fostered by faculty such as Associate Dean Lee Miller and Drs. Thomas Coates, Judy Currier, Daniel DeUgarte, Risa Hoffman, Mary Jane Rotheram, and Gail Wyatt, have launched educational opportunities for medical students, residents, fellows, and faculty at UCLA and all partner institutions, as well as opportunities for capacity building to improve medical education, clinical care, and scientific expertise in the region. Joint health research and community health initiatives that address important health problems in urban and rural communities in these countries are also integral to this program, which seeks to make UCLA a key partner in improving health in the southern Africa region.

100

Research projects with an international or global health focus

60

David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA faculty involved in global research

30

Partner countries with David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA research collaborations
Collaborating for innovation

The UCLA Center for World Health facilitates and develops partnerships with institutions around the world to promote innovation, research, education, and service, improving the health of people and communities worldwide. We partner with universities, ministries of health, private entities, and other organizations to promote innovative and collaborative approaches to health care.

HIGHLIGHT
The past year, the UCLA Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine dramatically expanded its telepathology network, adding more than five sites across three countries, including China’s First People’s Hospital of Yancheng City, Zhengzhou Sixth People’s Hospital, the Affiliated Hospital of Qingdao University, and others. Through the leadership of Drs. Scott Binder, Jonathan Braun, Jiaoti Huang, Jianyu Rao, and Thomas Rosenthal, UCLA is becoming the world’s leader in not only rendering second opinion pathology consultations, but in building clinical capacity at sites around the world. Due to the capacity building component of this initiative, the network has transformed into a hub-and-spoke model whereby UCLA trains faculty at international academic medical centers to render second opinions for smaller organizations.

12 Telepathology partner sites
3,000+ Telepathology interpretations
Engaging the community

The UCLA Center for World Health seeks to establish productive links with global communities and with international organizations based in Los Angeles and around the world. In 2014–2015, building dynamic collaborations with the Los Angeles World Affairs Council and Rotary LA5 was key to raising the profile of the Center throughout Greater Los Angeles. New partnerships with UCLA Alumni organizations located around the world promise to extend and enhance the Center’s reach, especially as we establish an External Advisory Board and an International Circle of supporters.

HIGHLIGHT

In November 2014, the UCLA Center for World Health co-sponsored President Bill Clinton's Keynote Address to the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. Exploring “America’s Role in the World,” President Clinton discussed domestic and international affairs. Emphasizing his focus on trend lines rather than headlines, he described the overall improvements in world health since the establishment of the Millennium Development Goals. President Clinton’s message recognized the role of organizations like the Clinton Foundation and the Center for World Health in supporting and improving U.S. relations around the world.

12 Major collaborative events featuring world leaders and global innovators

3 New External Advisory Board members
Richard A. Rawson, PhD  
Co-Director, Integrated Substance Abuse Programs and Professor-in-Residence, Psychiatry

Dr. Rawson led the first national household survey of drug use in Iraq 2014-2015.

Ines Boechat, MD, FACR  
Professor, Departments of Radiology and Pediatrics

Dr. Boechat founded the World Federation of Pediatric Imaging, a pediatric imaging platform uniting radiologists and experts worldwide to address the challenges in education, practice, research, and policy.

Karin Nielsen-Saines, MD, MPH  
Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, Infectious Diseases

Dr. Nielsen-Saines, expert in HIV perinatal transmission, was responsible for the largest perinatal multicenter HIV clinical trial ever conducted in Brazil, reducing mother-to-child HIV transmission and changing health care guidelines worldwide.

Shant Shekherdimian, MD  
Assistant Professor of Pediatric Surgery

Dr. Shekherdimian organized a pediatric surgery, gastroenterology, and urology symposium in Yerevan, Armenia, bringing together faculty from Toronto, Los Angeles and Seattle for a week-long training session that included didactic, bedside/OR, and simulator training.

Daniel Karlin, MD  
Medical Resident, Combined Program in Internal Medicine and Pediatrics

Dr. Karlin’s project evaluated prevalence of clinically significant depression in tuberculosis patients in the poor neighborhoods of Lima, Peru, and the effect of depression on treatment adherence.

Justin Zaghi, MD  
Medical Resident, Internal Medicine

Dr. Zaghi received a $250,000 grant from Saving Lives at Birth and Saving Brains on behalf of the Institute of Nutrition of Central America and Panama to design and implement rice fortification to prevent neural tube defects in Nicaragua.

Gail Wyatt, PhD  
Clinical Psychologist, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences

Dr. Wyatt hosted discussions with 33 medical students regarding experiences of diversity in medical school and in training to increase their professionalism.

Hannah Shull, MD – 2015  
2015 MD candidate and Global Health Pathway student

2014–2015 Achievement: UCLA Center for World Health External Advisory Board

In 2014–2015, the UCLA Center for World Health established an External Advisory Board. The Center has benefited from the excellent strategic advice supplied by Paul Schulz, former CEO of the American Red Cross in Los Angeles, as well as the invaluable contributions of Robert Sun, President of the American-Chinese CEO Society, and Dan Wenke, who brings entrepreneurial experience in China to the Board. The Center seeks to further develop the External Advisory Board in 2015 by recruiting new members, especially those sharing our vision of creating lasting change by improving health around the world.

Special 2014–2015 Focus: Strengthening Human Capital

International education, research, and service are core components of the mission of the UCLA Center for World Health. As part of its educational mandate, the Center has developed a program to strengthen the training of medical students in Latin America.

After an extensive exchange of ideas with leadership at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Nicaragua (UNAN) in Managua, Nicaragua, the Center has developed a course entitled Critical Thinking in Medicine. Taught in Spanish by UCLA Professor Emeritus Jorge Lazareff, the course aims to fill gaps in UNAN’s medical curriculum. One section, on how to properly read and write scientific medical articles — a key professional activity of doctors, researchers, and other health professionals — strengthens human capital by preparing Latin American colleagues to better understand research findings and contribute to the generation of new medical knowledge.

In September 2014, the Center launched the first live, interactive series of five lectures transmitted via the Internet to 60 health sciences students in Nicaragua. Students and instructors were able to communicate with instructors via email. After submitting his assignments, one student wrote, “Thank you for helping us believe in ourselves.”

UNAN Managua has secured funds to purchase wide-screen monitors to be installed in provincial hospitals so graduate physicians can participate in this program. As part of a planned program expansion throughout Latin America, a second cohort began the course in April 2015, and includes students from a medical school in Ecuador.

Center Leadership

Thomas J. Coates, PhD
Director

J. Thomas Rosenthal, MD
Co-Director

Greg Szekeres
Deputy Director

Lee Miller, MD
Director, Global Health Education Programs

Jorge Lazareff, MD
Director, International Medical Initiatives

Gitanjli Arora, MD
Co-Director, Global Health Education Programs

Daniel DeUgarte, MD
Co-Director, Global Health Education Programs

Michael Burke, MHA
Director, Business Development

Else Henry, MPH
Business Manager

Rosvita Rauch, PhD
Director, External Relations

Traci Wells, PhD
Director, Education
Our vision

To heal humankind through shared knowledge and compassion, and to make a difference in people's lives throughout the world.

Our mission

To improve the health of people and communities around the world through education, research, and service, and to guide the next generation of leaders to use their vision, talent, and commitment to transform the practice of world health to make a sustainable difference.