We build bridges and invest in people

The UCLA Center for World Health is committed to healing humankind through shared knowledge and compassion and to making a difference in the lives of people throughout the world. Our guiding values reflect our commitment to building relationships that are horizontal and cooperative rather than vertical and top-down. We build bridges and create partnerships based on respect and mutual benefit. One example of this is the long-standing relationship between our faculty in Pediatric Infectious Diseases and their colleagues in Brazil. With funding mainly provided by the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), UCLA investigators Drs. Karin Nielsen — who is Brazilian — and Yvonne Bryson have worked with colleagues in Brazil for more than 20 years on HIV, with a focus on reducing mother-to-child transmission.

The enduring relationship between UCLA and Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz) in Rio de Janeiro allowed for rapid assessment of Zika-virus-infected women in Brazil to determine the real harm that the virus can inflict during pregnancy. The results of their study, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, showed that fetal abnormalities occurred in 29 percent of Zika-infected women and in 0 percent of women who were not infected. Their work established the strong relationship between Zika infection during pregnancy and adverse birth outcomes, and laid the foundation for more in-depth examinations of how Zika affects the developing fetus and what steps might be taken to ameliorate the harm. (see page 2).

We work in the most resource-challenged countries in the world

UCLA has a long-term commitment to working in Malawi and Mozambique, two of the lowest-income countries in the world. In collaboration with Partners in Hope in Malawi, we are completing a seven-year President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and USAID project that implements Option B+, in which all pregnant women were offered HIV testing, with those who were HIV positive being provided treatment for life. Through this effort, mother-to-child transmission of HIV was brought down from 30 percent to 3 percent.
The team, led by Drs. Judy Currier and Risa Hoffman at UCLA and Mr. John Hamilton and Dr. Alan Schooley in Malawi, is now embarking on a new four-year PEPFAR and USAID-funded project to continue their efforts in Malawi and disseminate what we have learned to other countries in Southern Africa (see page 4).

Partners for Pediatric Progress, directed by Dr. Lee Miller, Professor of Pediatrics, Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Director of the center’s Global Health Education Programs, has been working in Mozambique for the past eight years to strengthen pediatric care in that country. When Dr. Miller and his team started their activities in Mozambique, there were 10-million children, 10 pediatricians, and no pediatric surgeons in the country. Through corporate and personal philanthropy, as well as funding from the Center for Disease Control and PEPFAR, UCLA has contributed to the training of two pediatric surgeons, and two more pediatric surgeons are now being trained. In addition, newborn mortality at the main teaching hospital has been reduced from 32 percent to 18 percent (see page 5).

We connect the local and the global

We deliberately chose the name Center for World Health for our title because we are working throughout the entire world, including our own backyards in Los Angeles County and the state of California. The more than 10-million people of Los Angeles County are diverse — about 35 percent are foreign born, and almost half of the total population identify as Hispanic or Latino/a. Our students learn that world health means addressing healthcare disparities in all settings: sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, Asia, and in our own neighborhoods. More than 18 percent of people in Los Angeles County live in poverty, and more than 20 percent have no health insurance. An estimated 254,000 men, women, and children experience homelessness during some part of the year, and approximately 82,000 are homeless on any given night — with between 5,000 and 10,000 unaccompanied youth among this population.

The future: sharing and learning in middle- and high-income countries

A majority of the countries in the world now have life expectancy greater than 70 years of age. More than 9 percent of Chinese citizens — 125 million people — are over the age of 65, and that number is expected to climb to 25 percent by 2050. To address this increasing longevity worldwide, health systems and healthcare providers in all countries must become experts in disease prevention as well as management and treatment of chronic illnesses and caring for the elderly.

Under the direction of Dr. Scott Binder, UCLA's Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine established a self-supporting telepathology program to assist Chinese physicians in the correct diagnoses and treatments of cancers, which account for 28 percent of deaths in China. We plan to expand this service to other countries in Asia in the near future.

Similarly, Dr. Ren Sun, a UCLA professor of molecular and medical pharmacology, established one of UCLA’s longest-standing relationships with Zhejiang University (ZJU), which includes education, training, and research-based activities in many departments. This collaboration was initiated at the leadership level, and to date 97 ZJU medical students have graduated (Class of 2014 and 2015) from ZJU Medical School after training in this UCLA-developed curriculum.

We in the U.S. have much to learn from our colleagues in other parts of the world as well. Countries such as Japan provide better preventive and acute healthcare than does the United States, and at a lower cost. By collaborating with our international partners, we can accelerate the pace of innovation and discovery.
Regional focus: Latin America

The Center for World Health’s Latin America Initiative is built on the premise that Latin America begins at the doorstep of UCLA and that independent research initiatives in every branch of biomedical sciences are crucial to develop a robust healthcare force in each nation. Research should not be a privilege of developed nations. Though universal healthcare is on the rise in Latin America, with Argentina, Brazil, and Chile leading the way, inequity remains in rural areas and in lower-income countries such as Nicaragua. Center for World Health faculty members are working in many settings in Latin America to build clinical care and research capacity to address both infectious and chronic disease and to improve health throughout the region.

Trailblazing Research on Zika Virus

Since arriving at UCLA 25 years ago, Dr. Karin Nielsen has worked with Brazilian colleagues on multiple collaborative studies. As complications related to Zika virus have become increasingly evident, Dr. Nielsen has collaborated with Dr. Patricia Brasil and the Arboviral Diseases Branch at the Fiocruz Institute in Rio de Janeiro. This partnership was the first to provide prospective data on pregnancy outcomes among women identified with Zika virus infection during pregnancy, including a spectrum of conditions described as Zika virus congenital syndrome. The findings were particularly striking because infection at any stage in pregnancy appeared to pose serious risk for negative pregnancy outcomes. These preliminary results were reported in The New England Journal of Medicine in March 2016. The prospective cohort study funded by NIH is ongoing, with 400 pregnant women enrolled to date. The group is continuing its research and soon will produce additional publications reporting infant outcomes and virologic and immunologic findings from the cohort.
Building an Emergency Response System in Nicaragua

Project SEMILLA, a partnership between emergency medical professionals in the U.S. and Nicaragua, works to improve emergency healthcare capacity through education, system organization, and improved access to technologies. Four of the project’s board members, including Dr. Breena Taira, are faculty at Olive View-UCLA Medical Center. In 2015, needs assessments were conducted in five cities on Nicaragua’s Pacific coast, with five UCLA medical students, funded through scholarships from the Dean’s office, involved in data collection and analysis. This data is being used to improve pre-hospital care. Project SEMILLA and the Center for World Health launched an inaugural Observership in Emergency Medicine, with funding from Paul Schulz, a member of the Center for World Health’s advisory committee. Nicaraguan physicians Juan Carlos Escorcia and Ivette Urcuyo traveled to UCLA for a two-week observership focused on point-of-care ultrasound and the use of simulation in emergency medicine. Both physicians brought the knowledge they obtained back to their home institutions and implemented new curricula based on their experiences. In February 2016, Dr. Taira was recognized for her dedication to emergency care and given the title of Honorary Professor of the National University of Nicaragua. In the same year, she also secured additional funding for this program through a Rotary grant.

Dr. Carmen Parida demonstrates emergency ultrasound techniques at a Project SEMILLA trauma seminar in León, Nicaragua, in February 2016. Photo: Callie Roth

Juan Carlos Alejos, MD
Associate Clinical Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and Cardiology
Dr. Alejos, president of Hearts with Hope Foundation, has strengthened the organization’s efforts to instruct local medical personnel in the treatment of children with congenital heart diseases, in conjunction with local children’s hospitals in countries including Peru and Ecuador.

Ricardo Reznichek, MD, MHA, FACS
Associate Clinical Professor, Department of Unology
Using his personal means, Dr. Reznichek established a nationwide synoptic pathology reporting system and developed reference labs in Nicaragua with partners in Managua and León in order to strengthen that country’s ability to effectively diagnose and treat cancers.

Amira Baker, MD
Fellow, Pediatric Infectious Diseases
Dr. Baker, supported by an NIH training grant, has initiated research in Peru, in collaboration with Instituto Nacional de Salud del Niño, focused on learning the best ways of disclosing a child’s HIV status to support the well-being of children and their families.
Regional focus: sub-Saharan Africa

While the rise of chronic disease seen elsewhere in the world is also occurring throughout Africa, most of the Continent is still burdened with morbidity due to trauma, maternal-child health challenges, and infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV. With 2 percent of the world’s population but 31 percent of the world’s HIV infections, Southern Africa is the epicenter of the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. UCLA physicians and researchers collaborate with colleagues in several African nations, including Malawi and Mozambique — two of the world’s most resource-limited countries — to improve surgical outcomes, enhance the health and well-being of mothers and children, reduce infections and death from HIV, and address other key health challenges.

Improving HIV Treatment in Malawi

Dr. Alan Schooley, a UCLA physician working in Malawi, has served as the clinical director of the Partners in Hope (PIH)-EQUIP project, a large USAID/PEPFAR-funded HIV-care-and-treatment program, since 2011. Thanks to resources provided by UCLA, John Hamilton, country director for UCLA’s programs in Malawi, has been living in Lilongwe since 2007 and has been instrumental in bringing success to clinical training, research, and service projects, including EQUIP. Under their leadership, PIH-EQUIP supports more than 130 clinical sites in the country to expand care for adults, children, and pregnant/postpartum women with HIV. They have forged strong partnerships with the Malawi Ministry of Health and supported critical programs, including the implementation of Option B+ for prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission. Through Option B+, such transmission was reduced from 30 percent to 3 percent. PIH, in partnership with UCLA, was recently awarded a four-year extension to the EQUIP grant and will continue to serve as a lead partner. In addition, UCLA has received a new USAID/PEPFAR grant as part of a multi-country consortium focusing on innovations in HIV treatment and care across sub-Saharan Africa.

With funding from The Hilton Foundation, the UCLA Center for World Health was given a two-year pilot grant to provide Early Childhood Development training to HIV-positive mothers enrolled in the antiretroviral therapy program. The goal is to help these mothers learn how to stimulate their HIV-positive and HIV-exposed children so that they develop to their full potential.
Advancing the Care of Mozambique’s Children

The Hospital Central de Maputo (HCM) is Mozambique’s highest-level referral center for pediatric patients and the main clinical-training site for future Mozambican pediatricians. Under the leadership of Dr. Lee Miller, a partnership was established in 2007 among UCLA, the Universidade Eduardo Mondlane, and the Department of Pediatrics at HCM. This capacity-building project supported by the CDC and PEPFAR, as well as corporate and private donors, focuses on the training of pediatric specialists and nurses to improve the quality of care and services provided for children at HCM, and on advancing the training of medical students, interns, and pediatric residents. There also is an active collaboration in surgery and research led by UCLA pediatric surgeon Dr. Daniel DeUgarte. This year, pediatrician Dr. Chris Buck has joined nurse practitioner Sarah Sheldon to oversee UCLA’s programs on the ground in Maputo. UCLA specialists in pediatric and neonatal intensive care and plastic surgery traveled to provide training to Mozambican colleagues, while a surgery team, pediatric nephrology team, and two pediatric residents from HCM came to Los Angeles for intensive training at UCLA. As a result of these initiatives, newborn mortality at HCM has decreased from a high of 32 percent to 18 percent.

Fola May, MD, PhD
Assistant Clinical Professor, Division of Digestive Diseases
Dr. May became a co-director of the Center’s Global Health Education Programs in 2015. She was also named director of internal medicine for Seed Global Health, an NGO that strengthens health education and delivery in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Christopher Tarnay, MD
Associate Clinical Professor, Departments of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Urology
Dr. Tarnay and a team supported by Medicine for Humanity performed more than 40 obstetrical fistulae and pelvic-organ-prolapse surgeries in Mbarara, Uganda, in September 2015, in tandem with training the next generation of Ugandan doctors to become proficient in these techniques.

Kristin Schwab, MD
Medical Resident, Internal Medicine
Dr. Schwab, a senior resident completing training in internal medicine and global health, has helped educate medical students and clinicians in Malawi. She plans to continue focusing on global health in her future career of pulmonary and critical care medicine.

Debbie Martins, MD ’16
Global Health Pathway Student
Through a prior UCLA research experience in Mozambique, Dr. Martins coauthored a manuscript on malaria-associated peripheral gangrene in the Journal of Pediatric Surgery Case Reports. She returned to Mozambique in 2016 for a clinical elective supported by the Dean’s office.
Regional focus: Asia

The largest and most populous continent, Asia encompasses a broad spectrum of development, from lower-resourced countries such as Afghanistan and Cambodia to wealthy nations like Japan and Singapore. The economies and health systems of many countries throughout Asia are evolving quickly. Our strategy in Asia is focused primarily on education, training, and capacity building in the areas of clinical care, research, and healthcare management and administration, with the intent of increasing the number of highly trained and competent physicians and high-quality facilities to meet the health needs of rapidly changing societies and communities.

Transforming the Treatment of Substance Abuse in Saudi Arabia

UCLA’s Integrated Substance Abuse Programs (ISAP), within the Jane and Terry Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior, focuses on alcohol and drug use, misuse, and addiction. ISAP faculty and staff conduct research, provide teaching and clinical services within UCLA and consult on regional, national, and international policy. ISAP also is working to export its expertise and training to other countries, such as Saudi Arabia. Dr. Rick Rawson and his colleagues at ISAP have hosted 11 Saudi psychiatrists at UCLA for year-long, intensive training experiences. This program, funded by the Saudi Government’s Cultural Mission, develops trainees’ careers in addiction medicine, provides them with the knowledge and skills to conduct addiction research, and familiarizes them with current prevention and treatment practices. During the scholars’ stay at UCLA, they undertake a rigorous and expansive curriculum of training provided by the UCLA Addiction Medicine Clinic, the UCLA Outpatient Research Clinic, and other UCLA and community-based facilities. This training program plays a major role in improving the treatment of people struggling with substance abuse in the trainees’ home country.
Pioneering a Systems Medicine Approach to Human Diseases

Dr. Genhong Cheng, a professor at UCLA’s Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Molecular Genetics, is founding director of the Center of Systems Medicine of the Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences, Suzhou Institute of Systems Medicine (ISM), supported by both the central and local government in China. This newly established institute in Suzhou, China, is one of the first official UCLA centers in China and explores systems biology and translational medicine approaches for innovative research and development toward improving health. ISM leverages its academic resources with affiliated hospitals, translational research incubators, and UCLA faculty expertise to develop an integrated patient-to-bench-to-product model for addressing human diseases. The new campus of ISM is under construction. The complex covers 12 acres, with capacity to house up to 1,000 full-time research employees, with 50 independent laboratories and centralized core facilities for functional genomics, structural biology, animal models of human diseases, and translational research. The campus also will be furnished with an incubator unit to aid translation and early product-development efforts.

Rendering of new Institute of Systems Medicine campus in Suzhou, China.

Anthony Aldave, MD
Professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Stein Eye Institute
Dr. Aldave formed a partnership with Aravind Eye Hospital in Madurai, India, where UCLA residents spend time each year observing and performing surgery and learning about the delivery of high-quality, low-cost eye care with support from Visionaries International.

Uday Devaskar, MD
Professor, Chief of Neonatology, Department of Pediatrics and Neonatology
Drs. Uday Devaskar and Joyce Wu conducted neonatology and pediatric neurology, oncology, and intensive care trainings in December 2015, as part of an exploration for a larger partnership between Mattel Children’s Hospital UCLA and Beijing Children’s Hospital Group, a consortium of 18 children’s hospitals throughout China, with funding from the Mattel Children’s Foundation.

Li Li, PhD
Professor-in-Residence, Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences
Dr. Li received funding from the U.S. government’s National Institutes of Health (NIH) Fogarty International Center to launch a UCLA/Vietnam training program to build research capacity to implement and evaluate HIV-control efforts in Vietnam, in partnership with Hanoi Medical University.
Expanding the role of global surgery

Once thought of as an extreme intervention, surgery is now acknowledged by international health professionals as an essential component of basic health services. Surgically treatable conditions account for approximately 30 percent of the global disease burden; however, the poorest one-third of the world’s population receives only 3.5 percent of global surgical interventions. Acknowledging the important role of surgery in primary healthcare, the World Bank has identified 44 essential surgical procedures that, if made universally available, would avert 1.5-million deaths a year and rank among the most cost-effective of all health interventions.

To foster sustainable and scalable surgical programs on a global level, the UCLA Global Surgery Initiative, founded with support from the Dean’s office and the department of Surgery, leverages the strengths of its surgical partnerships around the world. The UCLA Craniofacial Clinic, led by Dr. Reza Jarrahy, has established a formal relationship with Sobrapar Hospital in Campinas, Brazil, to help children suffering from craniofacial deformities. This partnership has supported basic science and clinical research collaborations as well as learning opportunities for both Brazilian and U.S. surgeons. Shant Shekherdimian, a UCLA pediatric surgeon, has formed a partnership with Arabkir Joint Medical Center and Institute of Child and Adolescent Health in Armenia. By using personal funds and leveraging a team of volunteer faculty members, Dr. Shekherdimian and collaborators are making improvements to the quality of surgical care delivered to children in Armenia. These and other global surgery programs engage UCLA surgeons, residents, and medical students to learn from, teach, conduct research with, and provide care to communities in some of the least-resourced countries in the world, and reflect an important shift away from solely conducting surgical missions to a training model that builds the capacity of local surgeons to provide sustainable treatment and care to their communities.

Bridging global and local

The UCLA Center for World Health was founded on the premise that global health begins at our doorstep in Los Angeles, one of the world’s most diverse cities.

Our Global Health Education Programs, supported by the Dean’s office, aim to address disparities in both local and global settings. As our world becomes increasingly interconnected, the solutions to local healthcare challenges can extend to many international initiatives. We find that our expertise and experience in developing global-health strategies also can be leveraged in our local communities.

As part of this initiative, we have launched a partnership with La Opinion — the largest Spanish-language newspaper in the United States — whereby UCLA health experts provide educational content published on La Opinion’s website. Our goal in establishing this alliance is to tailor a health-education outreach program that creates a positive impact in Spanish-speaking communities, both in Greater Los Angeles and abroad. To maximize the center’s local and global reach, we collaborate closely with the LA5 Rotary and the Los Angeles World Affairs Council. Both organizations share our core values, and our joint initiatives and events leverage education, public programs, and community mobilization to tackle critical local and global challenges.
Educating and training the next generation of global health leaders

Interest in global health education at UCLA continues to expand, with a record number of senior medical students participating in clinical electives in spring 2016. In addition to the seven countries where students have traveled in past years, a new elective in Costa Rica provides medical students opportunities to learn medical Spanish and develop clinical skills in this Central American country.

Following participation in these electives, students report an increased awareness of limited resource settings globally, as well as greater knowledge of the diversity of global health issues. UCLA medical students also have the opportunity to participate in global health research experiences and a designated Global Health Pathway, both of which attract significant student interest.

54 UCLA medical students completed international research or clinical electives

16 countries in which UCLA medical students completed electives (Botswana, China, Costa Rica, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Peru, South Africa, Thailand, Vietnam)

91 percent of graduating fourth-year UCLA medical students who participated in international clinical electives plan to continue working internationally

95 percent of graduating fourth-year UCLA medical students who participated in international clinical electives plan to work with underserved patients domestically

57 international physicians from 16 countries were hosted at UCLA for observerships (Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, India, Iran, Japan, Macedonia, Mexico, Mozambique, Nicaragua, South Korea, Spain, Thailand, Turkey)

UCLA residency programs that offer international clinical electives

Anesthesiology
Emergency Medicine
Family Medicine
General Surgery
Internal Medicine
Neurology
Obstetrics and Gynecology
Ophthalmology
Orthopaedic Surgery
Pediatrics
Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences

First annual Los Angeles Global Health Conference

The UCLA Center for World Health hosted the first Los Angeles Global Health Conference in February 2016, led by students from UCLA, USC, and Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science. The theme of the conference was transdisciplinary perspectives in global health, which encompassed medicine, nursing, public health, law, architecture, economics, and environmental sciences, among other disciplines. More than 450 participants from throughout Greater Los Angeles attended the inaugural conference, taking part in plenaries, breakout sessions, and debates on controversial topics such as the global phenomenon of compensated organ donation.

Dr. Shirley Evers-Manly of Charles Drew University, Dr. Lee Miller of UCLA, and UCLA student organizer Agatha Offorjebe (MD candidate of the Charles Drew/UCLA Medical Education Program) network at the first Los Angeles Global Health Conference.

Photo: Margaret Molloy
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.

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