

GLOBAL SURGERY
SUMMER 2023



Newsletter



Surgery
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

CURRENT EVENTS & COURSES

PGME Global Health Education Initiative

A 1-2 year longitudinal program providing residents/fellows with knowledge and skills relevant to the practice of global health and global surgery, taught by leading U of T faculty and global health partners.

More information:

<https://pgme.utoronto.ca/apply-for-pgme-global-health-education-initiative-2/>

Ash Prakash Fellowships for Surgeons from LMICs

Linking surgeons in lower-income countries with educational opportunities provided by the U of T Department of Surgery via funded fellowships in clinical surgery, education or research.

Contact Dr. Andrew Howard, Office of International Surgery, SickKids for more details: andrew.howard@sickkids.ca



WELCOME!



Global surgery is a field that aims to improve health and health equity for all who are affected by surgical conditions or have a need for surgical care, locally and globally. Many Department of Surgery trainees and faculty are engaged in efforts to address inequities in surgical access, quality and outcomes within Canada and internationally be that through clinical care, education, research or policy initiatives.

In the first issue of this newsletter for the 2023/24 academic year we highlight some of the excellent global surgery work being undertaken by U of T trainees Dr. Betel (Betty) Yibrehu (PGY3 General Surgery) and Dr. Funmi Wuraola (Breast Surgical Oncology Fellow), and faculty Dr. Tulin Cil (UHN), as well as the recent Bethune Roundtable Meeting on “Sustainability in Global Surgery” hosted by SickKids in May of 2023.

If you have a project, person or event you would like to feature in our newsletter and highlight to our community, please reach out, we would love to include this in the next issue!

- Dr. Mojgan Hodaie, Dr. Anna Dare

Bethune Roundtable on Sustainability in Global Surgery 2023

The Bethune Roundtable in Global Surgery was held as a hybrid meeting at the Peter Gilgan Centre for Research and Learning, SickKids, Toronto from May 27th-29th, 2023. The Roundtable is an annual interdisciplinary meeting which brings together health professionals from across disciplines and geographies committed to the care of underserved and marginalized patients locally and globally.

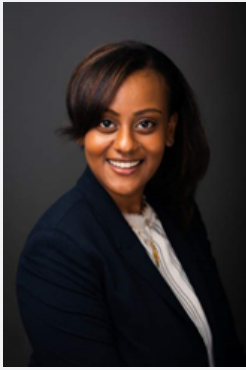
This year's theme was Sustainability in Global Surgery, which considered sustainability as it pertains to the health workforce, health systems and planetary health in the provision of surgical care. This diversity of perspectives on the theme was evident in the excellent and broad range of speakers and presenters, including keynote speakers Dr. Abebe Bekele (Dean of the University of Global Health Equity in Rwanda) who spoke on Redesigning Healthcare Education for Sustainability; Dr. Laura Donahoe (Thoracic Surgeon, UHN) and Dr. Andrea MacNeill (Surgical Oncologist and Founder, Planetary Health Lab, UBC) who together spoke on Planetary Healthcare for Surgeons; Dr. Joel Parlow (Chair, Canadian Anesthesiologists International Education Foundation & Anesthesiologist, Queens University)

who spoke on International Educational Partnerships to promote Sustainable Workforces and Dr. Ifereimi Waquinabete (Member of Parliament, immediate past Minister of Health, and Surgeon, Fiji) who spoke on Climate Resilience and Strengthening Health & Surgical Systems from the perspective of a small island nation. Speed mentoring returned this year, along with high quality poster and oral presentation sessions, including from the BRT 2023 Scholarship winners.

A trainee workshop focused on concrete actions for a sustainable global surgical future was held on the final morning, and highlighted the depth of commitment, enthusiasm and skill the next generation of global surgical leaders are bringing to solve pressing problems at the interface of health equity, surgery, and sustainability. Next year's Bethune Roundtable will be held outside of Canada, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with satellite sessions in major cities, including in Canada planned.

Many thanks to Dr. Andrew Howard and Dr. Anna Dare, for serving as Co-Convenors and to Joanna Giddens, Academic Coordinator, Faryal Mehboob, Logistics Coordinator, and Maricar Aruta, Logistics Support.

Trainee Spotlight: Dr. Betty Yibrehu



<https://surgery.utoronto.ca/mentorship>

Dr. Betel (Betty) Yibrehu is a PGY3 General Surgery Resident at the University of Toronto, Co-Founder of UpSurge and undertaking her research year as the Memorial Sloan Kettering Global Cancer Disparities Research Fellow in Nigeria.

We asked Dr. Yibrehu about the work she has been doing as a general surgery resident to promote health equity, diversity, and inclusion among trainees, and her global surgery plans for the coming academic year.

UpSurge is a diversity in surgery initiative within the Department of Surgery. I also joke that it's my second full-time job! As a PGY3, I helped co-found this initiative alongside Dr. Sav Brar, Adom Bondzi-Simpson and Preet Brar. Our goal is to help support and guide BIPOC and underrepresented students to careers in surgery.

Taking UpSurge from just an idea to a real-life organization with funding, social media initiatives (follow us: @uoftupsurge), and an executive committee has been challenging but rewarding. In addition to a successful mentorship program, UpSurge has hosted CaRMS prep sessions, showed a Day in the Life of BIPOC surgical residents and even a Week in the Life of some attendings. We are demystifying surgery as a way to excite and empower marginalized students to join our field!

While I was born and raised in Canada, my family is Ethiopian and as a child I would often hear about the disparate health outcomes of family and friends back home. I learned very early that health inequities exist and that the impact of them are far-reaching. This awareness and interest lead me to undergraduate studies in global health at the University of Toronto during which I did a research fellowship in Ethiopia.

During medical school and residency I continued to be involved in global surgery research and education, and completed the PGME Global Health Education Initiative certificate program.

Next year I am excited to be the inaugural Stern Fellow in Global Oncology Research at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center! The fellowship is designed to train residents on how to build a strong foundation in clinical research while collaborating with clinicians and researchers in LMICs. For the fellowship, I will be spending 3 months in New York City followed by 9 months in western Nigeria. In addition to research, there will be a clinical component while in Nigeria to help improve my understanding of what it means to have cancer in a developing country.

The advice I never got that I think everyone should hear is that global health doesn't equate with travel abroad. Travel can be an impactful and enriching aspect of the field but is not a requirement. Health equity and global surgery initiatives, research and organizations are ongoing in Canada. Pursuing these opportunities can be just as fulfilling and often-times more sustainable.

- Faryal Mehboob

Clinical Fellows selected for Princess Margaret Global Oncology Leadership Development (GOLD) Program



Congratulations to all the Department of Surgery Clinical Fellows who were selected for the 2022/23 Princess Margaret Global Oncology Leadership Development (GOLD) Program, and who graduated in May 2023. The program equips participants with the skills, opportunities and networks to develop as leaders in cancer care, locally and globally. Applications for the 2023/24 intake open on August 1st 2023. For more details, please see: www.uhn.ca/PrincessMargaret/Education/Cancer_Campus/global_leadership_development.

Research Spotlight: The ACTION Study Expanding access to BRCA testing for Nigerian women with breast cancer



Dr. Tulin Cil, a surgeon and researcher who holds the Gattuso Chair in Breast Surgical Oncology and Dr. Funmi Wuraola, a Breast Surgical Oncology Fellow and Prakash Fellowship Awardee at the University of Toronto are both leading the ACTION Study in collaboration with the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH) in Nigeria.

We asked them to tell us what prompted them to embark on The ACTION Study.

Breast cancer incidence is increasing in Nigeria. About 80% of patients present with locally advanced or metastatic disease compared to in high-income countries where the majority of patients present with early breast cancer.

Outcomes are poor with a 5-year survival of about 43%. Access to key diagnostic tests including genetic testing and counselling are limited.

This ACTION Study will determine the feasibility of performing saliva-based genetic testing for BRCA 1 or BRCA 2 in Nigeria, the genes most commonly affected in hereditary breast cancer.

The prevalence of BRCA among Nigerian women with breast cancer is poorly characterized, but breast cancer is often diagnosed at a young age in Nigeria, with high rates of triple negative disease.

There is some data to suggest BRCA prevalence may be higher than in North American populations. No context-specific guidelines exist on who should be screened for BRCA, or how to counsel patients and families.

The overall aim of the study is to establish a sustainable breast cancer genetic pathway in Nigeria, through patient education, and education of healthcare providers to deliver the results in a culturally acceptable manner.

To support the ACTION Study, Dr. Cil and Dr. Wuraola were awarded \$440,000 by The Princess Margaret Cancer Centre's Grand Challenges competition. The competition was introduced in 2020 with the support and generosity of Lindy Green and Sam Chaiton.

The award supports bold, cutting-edge, and highly significant projects, and aims to motivate the development and application of cancer diagnostics and treatments.

The ACTION Study team will be working with the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital (OAUTH) in Nigeria – where Dr. Wuraola was an Attending Surgeon prior to embarking on her Toronto Fellowship - on an educational module that will be accessible to healthcare providers in Nigeria, and can be adopted in other low-middle-income countries.

They are also developing patient education materials that will be translated into the 3-major indigenous Nigerian Languages which can be adopted at different tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Dr. Wuraola's long-term plans are to return to Nigeria and establish a breast cancer care unit with a research component. She also wants to build on the ACTION Study, to involve cascade testing, improving the surgical management of breast cancer, providing access to breast reconstruction, and most importantly advocating for breast cancer healthcare policy at the National level to improve screening, early detection and funding for cancer diagnosis and treatment.

- Faryal Mehboob

Contact

Mojgan Hodaie (MD, MSc, FRCSC)

Professor, Department of Surgery, University of Toronto

416-603-6441, mojgan.hodaie@uhn.ca

Toronto Western Hospital, 399 Bathurst St, West Wing, 4-443, Toronto, ON M5T 2S8