

# BUILDING AND CLAIMING THE FUTURE

DECEMBER 2008

## 2008 APHA Annual Meeting & Expo

“Public Health without Borders,” was the theme for the 2008 American Public Health Association 136th Annual Meeting and Exposition. Over 13,000 national and international physicians, educators, administrators, nurses, researchers, epidemiologists and students attended the meeting, which was held in San Diego, CA during October.

From the opening general session given by Professor Sir Michael Marmot of University College London, to the closing general session by three former US Surgeons General, the APHA sessions were packed with cutting edge information.

The poster sessions and the Public Health Expo

provided additional opportunities to gather new knowledge and to learn about the products and research of public health organizations and professionals.

The APHA is the oldest, largest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world, making it a wonderful opportunity for students to meet people working in their areas of interest.

For all of these reasons, the MCPHLT program sees attendance at the APHA as an invaluable opportunity for Tulane MCH students. Each year, the program offers travel stipends to graduate

students concentrating in MCH. This year, the MCPHLT was able to offer stipends to four students, who traveled to California to participate in the



meeting.

Prior to their departure, the program offered information sessions

and helped with travel arrangements, so that stipend recipients could get the most out of what could potentially be an overwhelming situation. The essays in this newsletter represent some highlights of students' experience and represent the variety of options available for those attending APHA.

## Upcoming Event

**Jan. 11-17, 2009**

SPH Students from John Hopkins University will be visiting New Orleans to do a variety of public health projects. Tulane students interested in meeting and working with JHU students, contact Heather Barrett at [hbarret@tulane.edu](mailto:hbarret@tulane.edu).

## 2009 Meeting Info

“Water and Public Health” the **2009 APHA Annual Meeting**, will take place from November 7-11 in Philadelphia, PA.

The deadline for 2009 abstract submissions is February 9, 2009. Visit [www.apha.org](http://www.apha.org) for more information.

Travel scholarships will be available in 2009 to eligible students.

## Networking Opportunities and Knowledge Enhancement

Apart from the opportunity to network for future career endeavors, one of my motivating factors for attending this year's APHA Annual Meeting was to gain more knowledge concerning public health issues that have been taught at Tulane. The advantage of the APHA conference being the largest gathering of public health professionals is that almost any public issue will to some extent be presented and or discussed. With countless public health issues to choose from, I personally tried to focus on learning and understanding how the process of Monitoring and Evaluations is used and tried to gain knowledge concerning global health careers.

For my own future goals concerning an international health career, I attended a global health career panel

led by accomplished professionals of different fields in public health. Many of them advised prospective students interested in global health careers to have a variety of experiences in different countries instead of focusing on one nation. They suggested students inquire and get to know already accomplished professionals in the international field and seek internships/jobs that will give experiences in areas of interest. Also, they advised that single women, should understand the obstacles associated with an international career, the dangers associated with this status and also the decisions associated with the future concerning marriage life and raising children.

Overall, this APHA conference was worthwhile because I was able to speak to many professionals from different public health fields and also gained networking opportunities for the future. This is one of the few opportunities to meet and speak with



Muhammad Bagana, Kemi Orekoya & Byron Hughes in San Diego

people of great caliber and a passion for the public's health.  
-Kemi Orekoya

*Kemi plans to graduate in May 2009 with a concentration in Global MCH. She aspires to use her knowledge in developing parts of Africa to pursue a career in*

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### Thank You

to our MCPHLT  
Executive Committee  
Members and staff for  
your work and support!

Maya Begaliev, MD, PhD  
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Carolyn Johnson, PhD  
Gretchen Clum, PhD  
Jeanette Magnus, MD,  
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Heather Barrett, MA  
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*Do you have ideas or  
photos that you would  
like to have included in  
a future newsletter?*

Contact Heather Barrett  
at [hbarret@tulane.edu](mailto:hbarret@tulane.edu)



Still image from "The  
Greatest Silence: Rape in  
the Congo"

## Scientific Sessions

The most valuable and remarkable session that I attended was entitled *20 years of Safe Motherhood Initiative in Africa, Back to the Beginning* and was presented by Nazo Kureshy of USAID. The session focused on maternal mortality in Africa and the challenges that persist in improving maternal and child health outcomes despite the launching of the Safe Motherhood Initiative in 1987. Every year, over half a million women continue to die due to pregnancy-related causes and over 95 percent of these deaths occur in the developing world. Since the Initiative was launched, there has been hopeful progress in some countries but maternal mortality rates have scarcely changed in Africa.

Even more striking is the fact that the causes of maternal mortality are known, the majority of these deaths are preventable through evidence-based interventions, and yet a woman still dies every minute during childbirth or as a result of postpartum complications. A major obstacle

## Documentaries

One of the most interesting sessions that I attended during APHA was a seminar, *Rape as a Weapon of War*. I went expecting a lecture, but it was actually a viewing of an international film, *The Greatest Silence: Rape in the Congo*. This was by far the most moving part of my APHA experience. I think it put a lot of the poster sessions and lectures into perspective for me because it gave a face to the struggle and inhumanity that still goes on around the world. For me, the film symbolized public health without borders. It was about the mutilation and raping of women in the Congo by the rebel soldiers. Little girls and women of all ages are continuously being taken advantage of in the Congo. They are treated as property that can be vandalized, and are. During the conference, it was difficult for me to see the links between the research and the people that it

to reducing and preventing maternal deaths is the dearth of emergency obstetric care in low resource settings and the paucity of trained birth attendants. Not only are there supply and demand barriers, but also policy barriers. If there is no genuine political will and commitment to minimize the burden of maternal mortality and to prevent future deaths, then it is unlikely that progress will be made towards achieving the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal to reduce maternal mortality by seventy-five percent by 2015, particularly in African nations.

It is also critical to realize that maternal mortality is linked to both neonatal and infant mortality, thus it is essential to promote safe motherhood before, during, and after pregnancy.

- Sandra Valenciano

*Sandra plans to graduate in May 2010 with a concentration in Global MCH. She aspires to change the world - one pregnant woman at a time.*

Sandra Valenciano  
& Lila Arnaud



affects. This documentarian clearly made the connection: she showed the desperation and need in an area where there are little initiatives being done, due to political strife. She was able to capture the intensity of an area where human rights are ignored. It also put into perspective my work within Global Maternal and Child Health and allowed me to recognize one of the many reasons I am in this field. This session, although overwhelmingly sad, was a painful reminder of the human element, the most important element, of Public Health and my focus as a researcher and activist.

- Lila Arnaud

*Lila is currently in her first year within the Global MCH concentration. Her passion for health disparities due to gender and ethnic inequalities motivates her to continue her masters & use the knowledge gained in her home country of the Dominican Republic.*

## Leadership Training

I was nominated to attend the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Student Leadership Workshop held by the American Schools of Public Health while in San Diego. It was truly a remarkable experience! The leadership workshop was segmented into a morning and evening session. The workshop was lead by a Past American Public Health Association President and the Founder of City-MatCH, Dr. Virginia Caine and Dr. Madga Peck, respectively. Dr. Caine illustrated how we, the young, new public health leaders, could transform the issues that affect us by providing great leadership within all the subdivisions of public health. She spoke of the various tools that could be utilized to make a difference in our leadership abilities. During the afternoon session, Dr. Peck challenged us to take initiative by giving us 15 minutes to re-design and re-create the atmosphere of the conference room to resemble our favorite café. Afterwards, we participated in an activity, *The World Café*, in which we practiced our networking skills by moving from table to table in the café we created. Some may ask, what is the purpose of this? It allowed us to evoke and make visible the collective intelligence of our group, thus increasing our capacity for effective action in pursuit of a common aim - better student leadership. The APHA meeting was empowering; I left California ecstatic about my overall experience. San Diego is a beautiful city, and it added value to my trip, because I have always yearned to see this particular city. I know that attending this conference will have a lasting impact on my life.

- Byron Hughes

*Byron plans to graduate in May 2010 with a dual concentration in Health Education & Communication/Maternal & Child Health. He will be attending medical school after graduation to pursue a specialty in Pediatrics. Byron plans to work in under-resourced communities in urban areas.*