



Summer 2001

# MIRT News

*Multidisciplinary International Research Training Program, 206-543-7559*

- MIRT Alumni continue their travels!
- AAAS 2001 Conference Highlights
- MIRT Orientation a success!

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## MIRT 2001 Begins

MIRT 2001 took off in June as ten undergraduate, graduate and professional students began their Fellowships in Ecuador, Peru and Zimbabwe. Students from the University of Washington, Dillard University, Washington University, Jefferson Medical College, Boston University and the University of Kentucky are represented this year.

On June 15, five fellows left for work in Ecuador with the Fundacion CIMAS del Ecuador. Accompanied by MIRT Coordinator, Daren Wade, the fellows (Ivy Kuofie, Tourette Jackson, Lorena

Chavez, Tibebe Tsegga and Marendra Wilson) arrived safely and participated in a wonderfully organized orientation program by CIMAS in Quito. Arlene Davis and Anuli Uzoaru left the US for the University of Zimbabwe on June 24 while Peru fellows, Carolina Mejia, Miriam Castro and Rosaelia Morfin left for Lima on June 27. This year's MIRT Fellows will spend 8-10 weeks at their foreign research sites and will contribute to research studies ongoing in their host countries.

## MIRT Fellows attend AAAS: Angela Moore Recognized

Five MIRT 2000 Alumni had the opportunity to present their work at a student poster session of the American Association for the Advancement of Science Conference in San Francisco, CA in February 2001. Melany Grogan '00, Ana Miranda '00, Angela Moore '00, Maricela Rodriguez '00 and Emma Spenner '00 each developed a poster presentation outlining their work with the *Fundacion CIMAS del Ecuador*.

Tamajah Gibson, '00 was also in attendance, said; "The AAAS Conference in San Francisco was absolutely amazing. We attended several symposia ranging from the prevention of malaria in the continent of Africa to the breakthrough research in the use of stem cells to treat Parkinson's disease. There was truly a plethora of information disseminated that touched on all aspects of health. The AAAS organization prides itself on exposing elementary and high school students to the wonders of science. I attended a seminar that provided me

with insight on how to get local youth interested in science and encourage them to pursue careers in research, medicine, and academia. The poster presentations were phenomenal as well."

Receiving special honors with an Honorable Mention Award was Angela Moore '00 for her paper entitled: "*A Qualitative Analysis of Mental Health and the Level of Personal Satisfaction Among Women Ages 14-65 in Tocachi, Ecuador.*"

In addition to the AAAS meeting MIRT Alumni have also presented their work in other academic settings. On April 7, 2001 Maricela Rodriguez '00 presented her research on hypertension to the Chicano Latino Medical Student Association Statewide Conference Research Forum in Los Angeles, CA. Emma Spenner '00 has had several opportunities to discuss her work on flower plantation workers with students and faculty at Western Washington University.



*Angela Moore '00 presents her work at the American Association for the Advancement of Science Conference, February 15, 2001 in San Francisco, CA.*

## Dr. Shalini Kulasingam, '96, Zimbabwe

*Dr. Kulasingam received her PhD in Epidemiology from the University of Washington in June 2000. In July she will join the clinical research team at Duke University.*



*"I look forward to an exciting and fulfilling career in epidemiology, and am grateful for my early MIRT experiences that helped to shape and continue my career."*  
*Shalini Kulasingam, '96"*



My excitement at being awarded a MIRT fellowship in 1996, to set-up a collaborative study examining shedding of Kaposi's sarcoma associated virus (KSHV) in Zimbabwean women was initially tempered by my lack of experience. Although I had been involved in clinical trials prior to starting the doctoral program in Epidemiology at the University of Washington, I had not been responsible for setting up a study from scratch. This was made all the more challenging by the need to collaborate with researchers from the University of Zimbabwe and Stanford University in the set-up and conduct of the study. With a team that included Dr. Williams, Dr. Woelk, Dr. Mohammed, Dr. Katzenstein, Sister Tina Mulambo, Tom Lampinen as well as a helpful and very entertaining group of researchers from the University of Zimbabwe and Stanford, this fellowship turned out to be "on the job training" for how to set-up a study and collect the data within a summer!

Personally, the study proved to be one of the more psychologically challenging experiences in my life, providing me with a unique window into the devastating consequences of AIDS in Zimbabwe. The majority of women who were enrolled into the study were young, married women who were faced not only with an AIDS defining illness, but also with the prospect of having to decide how best to care for their children once they were gone. Despite their illness, however, these women graciously consented to participate in the study, providing data on the largest prevalence study of KSHV shedding in women conducted to date. The publication of the paper in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* last year was a poignant cause for celebration - I doubt many of the women who took part in the research were alive by that time.

The work experience I gained as a MIRT Fellow was an underlying reason for my selection as a research assistant/study manager for the study that formed the basis for my dissertation. I had already performed many of the practical components of my dissertation, as a Fellow, including setting-up a study, designing a questionnaire, developing a specimen collection protocol, collecting and analyzing the data, presenting it in a public forum, and preparing a manuscript for publication. My dissertation examined the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of different tests that screen for pre-cancerous cervical lesions, including testing for the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV), the virus that is strongly associated with the development of cervical cancer. The field of cost-effectiveness has traditionally not been paired with epidemiology, but is becoming more widely adopted. The combination was a challenge for me, but one that I ended up enjoying immensely.

As a result, since completion of my dissertation in December, 2000, I have continued to work on topics that combine epidemiology and cost-effectiveness research. I recently accepted a position at Duke University, NC, which will allow me to continue my dissertation work on HPV and cervical cancer. In particular, I will be developing a computer model to examine the impact of vaccination against HPV on the incidence of cervical cancer in different countries. I look forward to an exciting and fulfilling career in epidemiology, and am grateful for my early MIRT experiences that helped to shape and continue my career.

## Cuba: Maricela Rodriguez '00

MIRT has awakened my desire to continue learning about new cultures and realities. Last month I went to La Havana, Cuba to take a "Cuban Rhythms" class through the Global Exchange Program. It was an absolutely breathe-taking experience, allowing me to experience a completely new reality. I learned so much from my interaction with people from Cuba who were willing to share their stories and homes with me.

I was most impacted by the spirit of perseverance that prevails in the people I met. They have so much spirit, demonstrated in the way in which they handle their economic hardships. Music and dance is the main unifying factor that I noticed between the people that I encountered. They have talent beyond belief. I took Afro-Cuban and casino dancing as well as percussion classes.

After talking to some doctors, I noticed the stress they place in public health in

their country. All Cubans have equal access to healthcare and according to the doctors; they have very little infant mortality due to their thorough immunization program. I was particularly impacted by the fact that they have "Sociedad de Abuelitos" which are senior citizen groups that are established to keep the older citizens socially active and connected in order to keep them healthy and happy. Cuba also has strong religious roots, with Santeria as their principal practicing religion. Santeria is a merge of African religion with Catholicism. Music is an integral part of the religious rites.

Overall, my trip to Cuba has fueled my curiosity to experience more realities so I should be headed to another country very soon... =). The amount I learned from my direct experience in other cultures is incomparable; this type of knowledge cannot come from books.



*Above: Maricela Rodriguez '00 continues her international exploration in La Havana, Cuba as she photographs a band and dancers through her "Cuban Rhythms" class.*

## Ghana: Tamajah Gibson '00

This summer, I will have the privilege of taking part in the Student National Medical Association's annual medical mission. In June, I will join several medical students and physicians on a one-week trip to Ada, Ghana, West Africa where we have planned a three-fold mission. The AIDS epidemic has ravaged the continent of Africa and according to the National AIDS Control Programme, it will account for over 35% of the nation's deaths by the year 2014. Our goal is to work with both government and non-governmental organizations to assess

the overall needs of the community of Ada to provide medical services and screenings free of charge, and to conduct AIDS/Sexual Health workshops. I am extremely excited about having the opportunity to participate in such a rewarding program in which I can help to make a difference in someone's life. After my first summer abroad with the MIRT program, I realize how much my self awareness and love for humanity has been enhanced. Even as a first-year medical student, I am more motivated to practice medicine on a global level.



*The quintessential MIRT Alumna, Maricela (center, left) gets REALLY involved and has a lot of fun!*

## Vietnam: Duy Nguyen '00

I am going to Vietnam this summer because as I enter my second year of medical school it will be my last chance to spend time away from my studies. Another reason is that as Vietnam develops its economy it will change, tearing down the ancient city of Hanoi and many historic sites.

My impression is that the country will be open politically with a free market. Hopefully, the transition to a free market economy as well as the changes in political power will be smoother than in other countries. If turmoil does not break out, I will go back to Vietnam someday and practice medicine.



## Suzanne Ware Jauregui '97

I just finished my first year (internship) of residency at Natividad Medical Center (Salinas, CA) in Family Medicine. My research with MIRT was on pre-eclampsia in Peru and we see a lot of this disease here at Natividad. In the hospital we residents are the only ones and get to do A LOT of obstetrics. This hospital is also a county one and serves the under-served, mainly Spanish and Mizteca (from Oaxaca) speaking migrant field workers.

## Aryian Riley '00

Following the completion of my second year of Medical School I'm taking a board review course for three weeks followed by taking my boards (USMLE Step 1) June 10th, then we start our clinical rotations the last week of June. So, basically, my life is over for the next two years!! (just kid'n!) I'm actually excited about getting to spend the majority of my time with patients (instead of in the library).

## Eyob Mazengia '96

After MIRT, I was accepted into the graduate program at the UW where I completed my Masters degree in Environmental Health. After I obtained my graduate degree, I did a year of fellowship with CDC in Boston on Emerging Infectious Diseases and also became a Registered Environmental Health Specialist. I published two papers (one from my fellowship

## Nicole Wagner-Banks '96

I am currently working as the Social Services Director at a private hospital here in New Orleans. I received my Masters in Social Work from Tulane University in December 1999 and have been working there ever since.

I am planning to return to school to complete nursing school and to obtain my Masters in Public Health. Recently I spoke at Phoenix High School's Junior High Commencement exercises on May 30, 2001. My topic was "A Recipe for Success."

I DO want to state that I am still planning to get my MPH. My trip to Ecuador reinforced my perception of the medical needs of the under-served and the need for conscious policy makers, grant writers, administrators, etc. to make a real difference. So I will definitely be finishing up my educational career with a MPH degree.

research and the other one from the work I did while working with the MIRT program).

Currently, I'm working with King County Environmental Laboratory as Environmental Health Specialist and Microbiologist. I am also contemplating going back to school to get either an MD or doctorate in Public Health.

## CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES!

Congratulations to MIRT Alumni, Dr. Milcah Larks '97, internal medicine, Emory University, Atlanta, GA and Dr. Tessie October '97, Pediatrics, Children's Hospital, Washington, DC. Both received their medical degrees from the University of Washington School of Medicine in June 2001. Congratulations to MIRT Alumna, Dr. Shalini Kulasingam '96 and Dr. Cheryl Anderson, '95 upon receiving their PhD's from the University of Washington.



*Young girls from Otavalo on their way to the markets in Cotacachi, Ecuador.*



*"My trip to Ecuador reinforced my perception of the medical needs of the under-served and the need for well-informed policy makers, grant writers, administrators, etc. to make a real difference"*  
Aryian Riley, 2000.



## Co-Director, Virginia Gonzales in Peru

The University of Washington has developed extensive research and training collaborations with two universities in Peru, the University Peruana Cayetano de Heredia (UPCH) and the University of San Marcos (USM).

With the support from the Fogarty International Center and National Library of Medicine, a program was designed by the University of Washington in collaboration with the UPCH and the USM to improve the informatics capacity of institutions in Lima, Peru and provide targeted training in informatics to Peruvian researchers at the University of Washington's Biomedical and Health Informatics Graduate Program.

From May 21, to June 2, 2001 the UW in collaboration with the USM and UPCH the University of Washington conducted an intensive two week course in health informatics entitled "International Research and Training in Health Informatics, Information for the New Millennium: An Introduction to Health Informatics 2001." The course introduced researchers and librarians to applications of computer technologies and information science in public health.

## Faculty, Staff and Alumni collaborate on MIRT Orientation

MIRT Faculty, staff and alumni collaborated to produce a successful orientation program for ten MIRT Fellows for the MIRT 2001 Program. Orientation Program was held over two days in early May so that students would have ample opportunity to take care of last minute details before leaving home for their respective foreign research sites.

UW staff nurse, **Patrick Giles** of the UWMC Travel Clinic provided a good overview of travel health and vaccination needs and **Helen McGough** of the UW Human Subjects office provided students with a lecture on bioethics and responsible research. MIRT Alumni, **Patricia Barron '99**, **Patrick Moran '95**, **Eyob Mazengia '96** and **Miroslava Aroca '97** were on hand to share their experiences.

The goals were to:

- Improve the informatics capacities of developing country institutions, to advance research and health surveillance activities by training key researchers and institutional support staff in those institutions in the use and development of modern informatics technologies in the health sciences;
- Provide targeted short-term training in informatics and related disciplines at the University of Washington and in Peru to develop and disseminate locally adapted knowledge of the informatics technologies in collaborating countries;
- Expand and improve ongoing collaborative research between the University of Washington and Peruvian and Ecuadorean scientists in the prevention, control and treatment of diseases of public health relevance.

This year we had the pleasure of expanding this course to include two participants from the Fundacion Centro de Investigacion Medico Ambiente y Salud (CIMAS) del Ecuador, Alfredo Vinicio Analuisa Chamba and Antonio Chamba Rodriguez. Both are mentors to UW students who are trainees from the MIRT Program in Ecuador.



*MIRT 2001 Fellows (left, clockwise) Ivy Kuofie, Lorena Chavez, Marenda Wilson, Tourette Jackson and Tibebe Tsegga in Quito, Ecuador.*



*"After my first summer abroad with the MIRT program, I realize how much my self awareness and love for humanity has been enhanced."*

*Tamajah Gibson, '00*

This year we were privileged and excited to have the participation of Fundacion CIMAS del Ecuador family coordinator, **Glenysis Zapata**. Ms Zapata, MIRT Co-Director, **Dr. Virginia Gonzales** and Zimbabwe Faculty Mentor, **Dr. Danuta Kasprzyk** talked to the fellows in order to alleviate any last minute fears about international travel and research. Special thanks goes out to MIRT Advisory Board member, **Karlotta Rosebaugh**, for coordination of the Minority Health Disparities Conference and the opportunity for our students to hear a lecture by renowned neurosurgeon and inspirational speaker, **Dr. Ben Carson** of John Hopkins University. In June MIRT faculty mentor, **Dr. Sixto Sanchez**, traveled to UW from Peru and met with our MIRT Fellows on his way to present at the Society for Epidemiology Conference in Toronto.



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**MIRT 2002**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS  
DECEMBER 15, 2001!**

# ALUM-NET

*Let us know how you're doing and what you've been up to!*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Work Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Affiliation with  
MIRT \_\_\_\_\_

About You: (awards, honors, publications, employment, personal, etc)  
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Permission to use this information in future newsletter Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

### About MIRT.....

MIRT is a national program designed to encourage students from underrepresented groups to pursue careers in biomedical and behavioral research. This program provides support for undergraduates and graduate students to receive research training in an international setting. Conceived and funded by the Fogarty International Center of the

National Institutes of Health, the UW MIRT Program has been developed in collaboration with Dillard University and Western Washington University. The program focuses on population-based health research in developing countries and builds on established linkages with academic institutions in Zimbabwe, Thailand, Ecuador, Peru, Argentina and Brazil.