We are excited to introduce our Fogarty class for the fall 2012 semester. As is often the case, our latest cohort of trainees have rich and varied backgrounds, positioning them for exciting research careers. They represent all four of our focus countries: Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Georgia and Russia. The class of 2012 includes students who are here for short term non-degree studies, post-doctoral lab training program, and candidates for the MS degree in epidemiology.

Timofei Galankin MD, PhD is a researcher at the St. Petersburg State Pavlov Medical University in Russia. Timofei has extensive clinical experience in psychiatry and plans to continue his research on injecting drug use addiction in Russia. He started his MS in Epidemiology at SUNY Albany in August 2011 and plans on graduating in May 2013 with his MS in Epidemiology.

Tamar Zurashvili MD is currently enrolled in the Masters program at the International School of Public Health in Tbilisi. She already holds a doctorate from the Faculty of Pediatrics at the Tbilisi State Medical University. She has also worked in a training capacity for the Tbilisi Family Medicine Clinic and Training Center. Dr. Zurashvili is completing non-degree coursework in Epidemiology at SUNY Albany and plans to return to Tbilisi for the Spring 2013 semester.

Dina Tserloyeva MPH joins us from Almaty, Kazakhstan where she is currently an Assistant Manager of Monitoring and Evaluation in Project Implementation Unit of the Global Fund, National Center for AIDS Control and Prevention. She holds an MPH degree from the Kazakhstan School of Public Health and plans to complete her MS in Epidemiology at SUNY Albany.

Ulan Kozhamkulov PhD is currently a research officer in the National Scientific Laboratory of Collective Use at the National Center for Biotechnology in Astana, Kazakhstan. Dr. Kozhamkulov joins us for the 2012-2013 calendar year to participate in the advanced laboratory study program at the New York State Department of Health Wadsworth Center in Albany, NY. He plans to continue his work in Astana after the completion of his program.

Tetyana Vasylyeva MPH joins us from Kiev Ukraine where she has recently earned her MPH degree from the National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy.” Ms. Vasylyeva has recently worked with the Center for Political Education in Kyiv, Ukraine. She plans on completing her MS in Epidemiology from SUNY Albany.

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Yuliya Sereda PhD, MA has recently earned her PhD from the V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University in Kharkiv, Ukraine. She is currently a Scientific Associate at the Department of Monitoring-based Research towards Socio-Economic Transformations Institute for Economics and Forecasting within the National Academy of Science. Dr. Sereda is currently taking advanced coursework in biostatistics and sociology at SUNY Albany and plans to return to her position in Ukraine at the conclusion of the spring 2013 semester.

Eka Karkashadze MD received her Medical Doctorate from the Tbilisi State Medical School Faculty of Pediatrics in 2004. Since then she has gone on to work as an Epidemiologist in the Infectious Disease division of the AIDS and Clinical Immunology Research Center in Tbilisi, Georgia. Dr. Karkashadze is currently pursuing an MS in Epidemiology at SUNY Albany with an expected graduation date of May 2014.

Annual Georgia Conference Held in Kvareli, Georgia

On June 27-29th NYS-ITRP organized and hosted the annual Fogarty Fellows Research Conference. The conference, held in partnership with Emory University, welcomed the Georgian alumni from AITRP and GID Fogarty-funded research training programs. Traditionally this meeting has been scientific conference with broad educational aims. However this year we put a sharp focus on trainee progress in a retreat setting at the Kvareli Lake Resort.

Sixteen former NYS-ITRP and Emory fellows attended the meeting along with US and Georgian faculty. The major goal of the conference was to intensively mentor Fogarty graduates in the development of grant proposals and publications. In addition, the meeting provided didactic workshops on improving scientific writing and publishing capacity. The graduates prepared and presented their research for faculty critique in topics related to TB, HIV, and other infectious diseases. There was also time dedicated to one-to-one faculty/trainee mentorship.

One product of the conference was a list of proposals for external funding agencies and a list of potential publication submissions for targeted journals. US mentors will maintain contact with trainees to track their progress. This new format and setting proved to be successful. We plan to have a similar meeting in 2013 and we look forward to seeing the progress of our trainees!

Nurse Training at Pavlov State Medical University in St. Petersburg, Russia

After providing a successful training in research basics with nursing faculty in Tbilisi, Georgia, NYS-ITRP faculty traveled to Russia for a similar training with the nursing faculty at the Pavlov State Medical University in Saint Petersburg. The four day training session training was held April 9-12 entitled “Integrating Research into Nurse Education: Training of Trainers Course.” The faculty for the course included Susan Holman, RN, MS and Katherine Marx, ANP, MPH from SUNY Downstate Medical Center as well as NYS-ITRP alumnus Damir Bikmukhametov, MD. Maia Polyukova, MS and Dmitri Lioznov, PhD MD, helped NYS-ITRP organize and implement the course.

The course was designed to provide participants with an introduction to broad research concepts, the basics of research process, and the application of nursing research, with an emphasis on the role of nurse researchers in HIV prevention and care. The Training of Trainers format allowed faculty course participants to evaluate the training modules and to provide further input on the content and pedagogy of the course. Time was allotted for participants to discuss not only course content but also address the effectiveness of teaching methods and training tools. Where relevant, coursework included examples of HIV related research, nursing research, and practical application of research concepts. One important aim of the course was to provide nursing school faculty with tools to teach nursing students (pre-service) and practicing nurses (in-service) how to assess the research literature as applied to practice.

Participants learned the basic components of research studies, including theoretical frameworks, study design and analysis, and how to integrate research into evidence-based practice. Emphasis was placed on acquisition of competencies necessary for teaching nursing students how to be knowledgeable research consumers including skills for critical evaluation of published research, and application of research findings to clinical nursing in Russia. By the end of this course, participants were able to outline key concepts in the research process in public health and clinical care and describe the various roles that nurses play in the conduct of research, with an emphasis on HIV prevention and care. They were also able to articulate the importance of evidence-based clinical practice and describe the components of research literature, including the formulation of hypotheses. In addition participants could identify the basic types of epidemiological studies and research design and cite basic data collection and analytical measures, including mixed methods approaches. The course also included modules on ethics in research critical analysis of research literature, using examples in nursing HIV research. Nurses could also develop a research question with an appropriate study design.

The training was very well received by the participants who found the material challenging but engaging. Wrote one participant, “The course was wonderful and informative. Thank you for the clear presentation and explanation of the challenging subject matter.” After four intensive and productive days of lectures, NYS-ITRP faculty and participating nurses celebrated with a certificate presentation and a dinner at local restaurant. We look forward to future collaborations with Pavlov University and further developments in our initiatives on research training for nurses.
As part expansion of efforts to our new target country of Kazakhstan, NYS-ITRP presented a major conference in Almaty on November 13-14, “Scaling up HIV Treatment and Treatment as Prevention Efforts in Kazakhstan.” The meeting was organized in collaboration with Columbia University’s Global Health Research Center of Central Asia (GHRCCA). Other sponsors of the meeting included the Kazakhstan Republican AIDS Center, the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the US Centers for Disease Control and Development (CDC).

The meeting was attended by more than 80 participants from all regions of Kazakhstan, and included researchers, Kazakhstan Ministry of Health (MoH) officials, NGO service providers, physicians from regional AIDS Centers, US and Kazakh funding organizations, and academicians from the Kazakh School of Public and Health and Kazakh National Medical University. The conference began with introductory remarks by the directors and senior officials of the sponsoring programs, including Azhar Tolegaliyeva (MoH RK), Marat Tukeyev (Republican AIDS Center), Nabila El-Bassel (GHRCCA), Jack DeHovitz (MD, MPH SUNY Downstate), and Assel Terlikbayeva (GHRCCA). Punkin Stephens from the School of Public Health, University at Albany provided a review of HIV epidemiology and antiretroviral treatment (ART) penetration on a global scale. Dr. DeHovitz and Robert Remien, PhD from Columbia University provided an overview of the science of treatment and prevention and implementation challenges. Kazakh speakers addressed the specifics around HIV care and ART scale-up in Kazakhstan. Notable speakers for the day included a former NYS-ITRP trainee, Zhamilya Nugmanova, MD, of the Kazakhstan National Medical University who gave a detailed overview of drug resistance issues in Kazakhstan. The first day concluded with a questions and discussions session.

Sean Philpott, PhD, director of the Fogarty-funded Advanced Certificate Program in Research Ethics for Central and Eastern Europe at Union Graduate College, started the day with a thought-provoking lecture on the research ethics issues related to treatment as prevention. His talk was followed by a panel on treatment access for special populations which featured representatives from international and national NGOs. A second panel provided an update on current access to care and HIV prevention research projects in Kazakhstan, including those directed by GHRCCA. The conference concluded with an open discussion potential collaborative research projects related to ART scale-up and treatment and prevention and a final panel on research training opportunities in Kazakhstan. Dr. DeHovitz, Ms. Stephens, and David Odegaard were also able to interview potential candidates for NYS-ITRP while visiting the campuses of the Kazakh School of Public Health and Kazakh National Medical University.

One exciting and unanticipated developments of this meeting was a request that the conference organizers draft a resolution to be presented to the Ministry of Health on the importance of scaling up treatment as prevention in Kazakhstan. During the course of the meeting, the guest faculty produced a draft document and invited comment from audience members. On the Saturday following the meeting, a story about the conference was published in a prestigious Kazakhstan newspaper.

We are grateful to Dr. El-Bassel and her staff at GHRCCA for the opportunity to participate in this seminal meeting.
Human Rights Physicians Kamiar and Arash Alaei Speak at Downstate, SPH Albany

On February 2nd and November 8th 2012 Kamiar and Arash Alaei provided SUNY Downstate faculty and students with two lectures on HIV and human rights as part of our HIV Research Seminar Series. The lectures were co-sponsored by NYS-ITRP and supported by the John Conley Division of Medical Ethics and Humanities. These two courageous physicians talked extensively about their work in Iran, including the establishment of network of groundbreaking clinics that offered treatment for STI infections, HIV/AIDS and substance use. They clashed with governmental authorities in their advocacy for prisoner rights and promotion of prevention strategies such as clean needles, condoms and methadone therapy. Subsequently they were arrested and imprisoned, officially charged with conspiracy to overthrow the Iranian government and collaboration with an enemy government. Amazingly, their work with vulnerable populations did not stop as result of their imprisonment since they made efforts to improve prison conditions and educate inmates. By the end of the lecture, the audience understood the HIV/AIDS treatment and care situation in Iran and had an inspiring account of commitment to public health and patient care.

Kamiar Alaei also joined our NYS-ITRP students for lunch during one of our campus visits in the fall. The Alaei brothers are connected to the SUNY system as Kamiar Alaei is a doctoral candidate at the SUNY School of Public Health at the University of Albany. In August of 2012, the Alaei brothers became the inaugural recipient of the Elizabeth Taylor Award in Recognition of Efforts to Advocate for Human Rights in the Field of HIV presented by the American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR). In response to their imprisonment, University of Albany administrators, graduate students, faculty and staff joined an international campaign including vigils and protests aimed at their release. We thank them for taking the time to speak to us and we hope to hear more about their activities in the near future.
NYs-ItrP Travels to Ukraine for a Series of Workshops

Over the last year, NYS-ItrP has greatly expanded activities in Ukraine through our partnerships between the Ukraine AIDS Alliance and the Center for Disease Control (CDC).* Our latest achievements include a two workshop trip to Kiev in April followed by another double-header in September with conferences in Yalta and Kiev. These workshops brought together students and US faculty mentors for intensive work on preparing their manuscripts for publication. They also provided an opportunity for US faculty and Ukrainian researchers and policy makers to review intervention effectiveness and evaluation measures at the highest level.

The first of the April workshops was held over the course of two days between April 23rd and 24th in Kiev. This workshop was the second part of our manuscript project and attracted over twenty participants who were required to have their own entered data. Dr. Jack DeHovitz made introductory remarks introducing the faculty and giving the participants an overview of the goals of the workshop. In order to give participants an example of a successful project, Dr. Tetiana Kiriazova presented her case study from her work in Odessa with the assistance of Dr. Michael Joseph (SUNY Downstate). The participants were then required to present their own projects which included a 15-20 minute presentation and a 10-15 minute faculty critique and analysis. The presentations were interspersed with lectures by Dr. DeHovitz and Dr. Phillip Alcaces on preparing a manuscript for publication. The workshop concluded on the second day with a final lecture by Dr. Alcaces on ethical considerations in research.

The second April workshop was held in the next two days with a focus on the effectiveness of HIV prevention interventions from hypothesis to design. This smaller meeting was attended by approximately ten Alliance Ukraine project planners and US faculty members, and former Fogarty trainees from Estonia serving as faculty members as well. The lecturers addressed a variety of issues starting with an overview of Ukrainian studies in IDUs and special populations. Other topics included techniques for data triangulation and data analysis for program evaluation and an implementation science overview. Participants were also encouraged to discuss their intervention project proposals with the faculty in three separate discussion sessions.

Given the success of the April workshops, we decided to continue working on these issues with two more workshops in September. The first of these was held from September 9-11 in Yalta which offered a refreshing change of scenery from our usual venues. The workshop was intended as brainstorming session in combination with didactic sessions in order to review current data from HIV prevention interventions in Ukraine and to refine a draft study concept. Participants were also instructed to further develop the theories and hypotheses of these interventions and to finalize effective study methodology and design with the final goal proposing components for a draft operational manual for regional field staff. Specific lectures included overviews of HIV prevention projects and epidemiology in Ukraine. There was also time set aside for discussion for all the element of building an effective intervention protocol. Participants were asked to consider hypothesis formulation, data collection, study instrument selection and other crucial intervention components.

Following the productive workshop in Yalta, we travelled to Kiev for the third installment of our project to presentation series. The workshop was held September 13-14th with the same participants from the April workshop. Since April the participants had been working on their projects and already completed the method sections of their studies prior to the workshop. Once again the participants were asked to present their updated manuscripts to US faculty and were asked to discuss their projects. Also crucial to the workshop was the lecture given by Dr. Signe Mezinka (University of Latvia Center for Bioethics and Biosafety) on ethical considerations in manuscript preparation.

With the successful and productive conclusion of this workshop we are planning to hold the fourth and final part of this workshop series in April 2013. We hope that we will see many of the excellent manuscripts presented in April and September develop into publications.

* See article “NYS-ItrP Receives New Funding for Ukraine”
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