

Elizabeth Corey, PGY-4
Ethiopia Elective

Accomplishments

- Assisted in writing the IRB for our research project titled “A study to evaluate and refine current cervical cancer screening in Ethiopia”
- Worked with local residents to enroll approximately 60 women into our study and to screen each for cervical cancer
- Taught local residents about colposcopy and supervised these residents in performing colposcopies on the 60 above women
- Learned how to perform visual inspection with acetic acid (VIA) and cryotherapy
- Attended and participated in the first maternal mortality review meeting
- Attended a mentoring session by Dr. Geller and participated in discussions on how to improve mentoring at Ayder
- Arranged and attended multiple meetings to brainstorm mutually beneficial projects and research to be conducted by researchers at Mekelle University and UIC that would take place at Ayder
- I plan to continue to be involved with the cervical cancer screening research project data analysis and paper writing for publication

Summary

Orientation:

Global health work should be sustainable, ethical, and empowering. The University of Illinois partnership with Mekelle University, Ethiopia exemplifies these qualities.

Mekelle is a vibrant city. One could never get bored walking or driving through the city. The streets are filled with a mesmerizing clash of taxis, buses, animals and people walking. Cars, motorcycles and trucks swerve around each other; the lines painted on the road are only suggestions. A variety of private shops and stores fill the sidewalks and Ethiopian hillside paints the backdrop.

Upon arrival to Ayder referral hospital, we met with Dr. Amanuel, the dean of the hospital, to prioritize our activities for the week. Dr. Amanuel has a soft voice, thoughtful words, and a gentle personality. He cares deeply for the people in his community and providing the best possible care to the patients. He emphasizes that all work done in the hospital should be aimed at improving the health of the people that the hospital serves.

The conversation we had with the dean of the hospital was both productive and honest. It was clear that this week would flow smoothly and be the result of the culmination of hard work from both UIC and Mekelle staff members. Dr. Amanuel was incredibly passionate about improving the health of women.

Projects that were discussed included: carrying out the research study that explores the most effective way of screening for cervical cancer in low resource

settings; establishing the hospital's first committee that reviews all the maternal deaths and near misses; initiating a study exploring how printing fetal heart rate tracing on paper affects the rate of cesarean section; and establishing a mentorship program among the staff at the hospital.

The dean of the hospital was incredibly supportive and committed to the projects we discussed and at one point stated, "*may the quality of our hospital be judged by the quality of the care we provide to our women and mothers.*"

My Main Project

During my time in Mekelle, I focused most of my time on the cervical cancer-screening research project.

The study aims to screen 250 women for cervical cancer with pap smears, HPV testing, visual inspection with acetic acid and obtaining a cervical biopsy as the gold standard for diagnosis. The study will analyze the sensitivity and specificity of the listed methods as well as the methods in combination. The aim is to determine the most cost-effective ways to screen for cervical cancer. If the women screen positive for visual inspection with acetic acid, the "screen and treat" approach is utilized. During the same exam, the women are treated with cryotherapy. If cervical cancer is identified the women are referred to a hospital in the capital that can treat women with cervical cancer.

This study is important because cervical cancer is the second most common female cancer in Ethiopia with two thirds of women with cervical cancer dying from the disease. In the United States, cervical cancer screening has halved the number of cervical cancer cases. In Ethiopia, efforts are being made to determine the most cost-effective way to increase the number of women screened for cervical cancer.

The residents from Ayder were eager to learn about cervical cancer screening. The senior residents were already proficient in visual inspection with acetic acids. As I was proficient in colposcopy, we shared our knowledge and provided each other with education to fully screen and treat these women.

The researchers at Mekelle University have already enrolled 100 women in the research study and have screened them for cervical cancer. The week that I was present, 5 surrounding areas were mobilized. Women in the community were educated about cervical cancer and encouraged to come to Ayder for cervical cancer screening. I worked with other local residents to screen the women. Throughout the week we screened a total of 60 women as well as educated them about cervical cancer screening and prevention.