



A PIVOTAL YEAR

Introduction

If the past year has taught us anything, it’s that infectious diseases know no borders, and “global health” affects us all. The COVID-19 pandemic has uprooted our lives, changed the way we work, and created many new urgent challenges, both in New Jersey and around the world.

With necessary spending restrictions imposed across the university, it was not possible to produce a professionally designed annual report this year. However, because we believe in the importance of advocacy and tracking our progress, we offer this abbreviated report.

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COVID-19 in New Jersey

Rutgers Global Health Institute joined [Newark Strikeforce](#), the city's COVID-19 taskforce, and helped launch the city's initial contact tracer training efforts. We developed content and coordinated a webinar for contact tracers on April 28.

Institute director Richard Marlink co-led the Testing Task Force for Newark, creating the first 30-day testing plan. Marlink also served on the Newark Strikeforce Data and Data Analysis Committee.

The institute is also an active member of the Healthier New Brunswick coalition. Given the public health emergency of COVID-19, we paused the development of our Enhancing Care Initiative on diabetes to address pandemic-related needs. We helped with developing content and design for public health materials for community members, focused on telemedicine and frequently asked questions about contact tracing. We also began developing an online training for small businesses to help them to reopen safely.

COVID-19 in Botswana

We launched a nationwide webinar series, enabling clinicians and public health personnel to disseminate COVID-19 guidelines across Botswana, according to topics prioritized by Botswana's Ministry of Health and Wellness. We established a YouTube channel for the Botswana-Rutgers Partnership for Health and posted [videos of the training sessions](#) for use internationally.

So far, we have hosted 12 webinars, covering such topics as clinical guidelines, patient management, epidemiology, case definitions, testing, contact tracing, critical care for non-ICU provider, pregnant women and neonatology, health district preparedness, continuity of health services during an outbreak, and COVID-19 taskforce updates. The webinar series is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the University of Botswana, and the Botswana-Harvard AIDS Institute Partnership.

At the request of the United States Embassy in Botswana, we submitted a proposal, "Creation of a COVID-19 Clinical Telehealth Program for Distance Learning, Tele-mentoring, and Telemedicine in Botswana." The proposal is now under review by the U.S. State Department. The US State Department funding program involved is called the University Partnership Initiative. The goal of our project is to identify and address the needs for health information technology with the Government of Botswana and the University of Botswana (UB), related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The outcomes of this assessment will provide site-specific information for the four main UB clinical training locations outside of the capital to establish video-conferencing platforms, infrastructure, and connectivity. This distance learning assessment will provide the

basis for clinical telementoring between the academic and government health care facilities, so that both the COVID-19 response and the response to other infectious or noncommunicable diseases can be strengthened.

We also produced, and promoted to the media, an advocacy-oriented Q&A on the expected [impact of COVID-19 in sub-Saharan Africa](#).

Botswana-Rutgers Partnership for Health

Cancer Care and Prevention

National Workshop

In August 2019, we partnered with the University of Botswana and Botswana's Ministry of Health and Wellness to conduct a national workshop on cancer care and prevention. The workshop outcomes and recommendations were compiled in a [comprehensive leadership report](#). From these recommendations, the National Cancer Care and Prevention Needs Assessment was created, and a study on the diagnosis of metastatic breast cancer was created and [funded by the Union for International Cancer Control for \\$25,000](#).

The National Cancer Care and Prevention Needs Assessment has received IRB approval from both the University of Botswana and Rutgers IRB offices. The study has started in the village of Ramotswa with a piloting of the Manual of Operations and the Study Instruments.

New Appointment

We worked to recruit and hire Peter Vuylsteke, an experienced medical oncologist, for an appointment in the University of Botswana's Faculty of Medicine with an adjunct appointment at Rutgers, effective January 2020.

Vuylsteke's appointment is supported with funding from the New Jersey Alliance for Clinical and Translational Science. He will help with our D43 NIH Research Training Grant Submission, in conjunction with the UB Faculty of Medicine and Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, with the aim of providing a research track as part of medical and oncology training in Botswana.

Global Oncology Fellowship

Previous fellows continue to be actively involved in the training program, and two additional fellows (Pallvi Popli and Mansi Shah) were able to travel to Botswana this fiscal year. The fifth fellow, Sharon Li, had her trip delayed due to the pandemic. The three most recent fellows are all participating in content development remotely to continue to support health care enhancements in the country.

Ashwin Chandar, MD (Fall 2018): Chandar presented a poster, *Building international partnerships to improve global oncological care: Perspective from Rutgers-CINJ Global Oncology Fellowship Program*, during the ASCO Quality Care Symposium. He returned to Botswana in August 2019 after he had left Rutgers for Temple University, continuing to participate as part of our team effort.

Sukhdeep Kaur, MD (Fall 2018): Kaur investigated stock-outs of essential medications from the oncology formulary. In November, Dr. Kaur continued with this project and compiled a list of the medications used from October 2017 to September 2018, sorting them by month as well as by regimen for a particular cancer diagnosis, in order to see trends of chemotherapy utilization.

Pallvi Popli, MD (Fall 2019): Popli worked closely with the only in-country oncologist, updating and developing cancer care guidelines to be used across Botswana. Popli has joined a team Richard Marlink compiled that has completed a meta-analysis of breast cancer receptor studies in six East African countries.

Mansi Shah, MD (Fall 2019): Shah focused on developing tools for the local oncology staff at Princess Marina Hospital, including the creation of a hematology-oncology emergencies protocol and an oncology intake form. These protocols have been converted to presentations for future use in Botswana and elsewhere in Africa.

Sharon Li, MD (Spring 2020): Li is continuing provider education on hematology-oncology emergencies and analyze the needs assessment data.

Advocacy

Richard Marlink's [op-ed](#) ("We've saved millions of people with HIV/AIDS. Now, let's do the same for cancer.") was published on [NJ.com](#) and in the Sunday Star-Ledger (print version) on December 1, World AIDS Day. The online version had 525 shares from NJ.com alone.

Marlink's [60-Second Challenge video](#), "Why You Should Care About Cancer in the Developing World," was produced by Rutgers University Communications and Marketing and promoted on February 4, 2020, the 20th anniversary of World Cancer Day. Rutgers shared the video on its YouTube and social media channels, as well as in Rutgers Today.

Oncology Talks

On December 3, 2019, Rutgers Global Health Institute hosted a lunchtime discussion led by guest lecturer Yehoda Martei from the University of Pennsylvania, regarding breast cancer therapy delivery through the lens of her research based in Botswana. Two other oncology talks that had been planned for March and June were put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Leadership Summits

A delegation of 16 senior-level government and higher education officials convened in New Brunswick from December 8 to December 14, 2019, to participate in a leadership program developed by the Rutgers Center for Organizational Leadership with significant participation and support from Rutgers Global Health Institute. This program follows the first Botswana-Rutgers Leadership Summit that took place in May 2019, when a delegation of 16 cabinet- and senior director-level government officials came from Botswana to participate in a 12-day event.

During this residency event, the Botswana cohort had the opportunity to delve into the seven-dimension model for organizational assessment, planning, and implementation developed and presented by the core planning team. In addition, there were presentations on assessing and leveraging leadership strengths, leadership strategy and organizational effectiveness, and change leadership and performance metrics and management.

More information on the Botswana-Rutgers Leadership Summit program (May and December 2019 events) can be found on the [Center for Organizational Leadership website](#).

Teaching Hospital

We developed a comprehensive proposal to engage in a technical advisory relationship between the new Sir Ketumile Masire Teaching Hospital and Rutgers. This effort involved close collaboration with the teaching hospital team. It included an on-site and virtual site visits and needs assessments to fully scope the scale of technical advisory support needed. The proposal and budget was approved by the hospital's board of directors. As the contract is being reviewed, a project workplan and deliverables are being developed to reflect the new realities of COVID-19 travel restrictions and difficulties.

Learn more about our [work in Botswana](#) on the Rutgers Global Health Institute website.

Community Partnership: Las Carolinas, Puerto Rico

After two funded trips to Puerto Rico by a joint team representing Rutgers Global Health Institute, RWJBarnabas Health, and other faculty from Rutgers and University Behavioral Health Care, the goal of which was to provide assistance following the devastation of Hurricane Maria, a [community garden project in Las Carolinas](#) was established. Activities in Puerto Rico have since shifted to working with the University of Puerto Rico and its health systems (e.g., pathology department and pharmacy department) for needed training and support. Two proposals for these activities were funded by RWJBarnabas Health and completed with three visits to Puerto Rico.

There is currently a big demand for telemedicine in Puerto Rico. The team's latest project involves MindRight, a mental health text messaging app. This app involves personalized, live coaching with text messages for teens who want to talk, judgment free. Teens can text "hello" to reach therapy coaches through the app.

Rutgers Global Health Institute has been working to expand these efforts to include Rutgers' School of Social Work and School of Health Professions. However, these activities are now on hold due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

International Partnership: University of Dodoma, Tanzania

As part of a universitywide partnership Rutgers Global Health Institute had facilitated with the University of Dodoma in Tanzania, partnership coordinator Janell Billig traveled to Dodoma in the first quarter of the year. In December, she arranged and hosted the head of psychiatry from the University of Dodoma to visit Newark and New Brunswick campuses for seminars and meetings to explore future collaborations. These discussions continued virtually.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the three Rutgers schools involved in joint teaching efforts on-site in Dodoma have all put those plans on hold. These schools are the School of Nursing, the School of Public Health, and the School of Health Professions.

Global Health Seed Grants

In collaboration with Rutgers Global, we made Global Health Seed Grant applications available to Rutgers faculty across all campuses. We received 29 applications. After the applications were submitted, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and began impacting the United States. Subsequent modifications were allowed as part of the process. The five recipients chosen were:

Research

Development of a Mobile Health App to Improve the Safe Use, Storage, and Disposal of Opioid Medications

Ann D. Bagchi, PhD, DNP (\$10,000 / 1 year)

The Development of an HIV Prevention Group Intervention for MSM Migrants in South Africa

Edward J. Alessi, PhD, LCSW (\$10,000 / 2 years)

Development of an Ultrasensitive COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Detection Method Using Upconversion Nanoparticle-based Biosensing

KiBum Lee, PhD (\$10,000 / 2 years)

Education, Training and Capacity Building

Transdisciplinary Intergenerational Community Engagement Model for Senior Health Promotion in Greater Newark

Diane Hill, PhD (\$10,000 / 1 year)

A Cross-sector Partnership to Promote Equity in School Readiness

Manuel Jimenez, MD, MS (\$9,962/1 year)

Membership

We added 30 new core faculty members this year. They represent 12 different schools from across Rutgers:

Shahid Aziz, Rutgers School of Dental Medicine

Ann Bagchi, School of Nursing

Radhika Balakrishnan, School of Arts and Sciences

Alok Baveja, Rutgers Business School–Newark and New Brunswick

Cara Cuite, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences

Karen D'Alonzo, School of Nursing

Maria Gloria Dominguez-Bello, School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, School of Arts and Sciences

Nir Eyal, School of Public Health

David Foran, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Barbara Gladson, School of Health Professions

Lauri Goodell, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Ashley Grosso, School of Public Health

Diane Hill, School of Public Affairs and Administration

Shawna Hudson, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Sneha Jacob, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Olga Jarrín Montaner, School of Nursing

Woojin Jung, School of Social Work

Sunyoung Kim, School of Communication and Information

Anita Kinney, School of Public Health

Kelly Kohler, School of Public Health

Corina Lelutiu-Weinberger, School of Nursing

Matthew Matsaganis, School of Communication and Information

Benjamin Melamed, Rutgers Business School–Newark and New Brunswick

Shristi Rawal, School of Health Professions

Evita Sadimin, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Jaya Satagopan, School of Public Health

Charles Senteio, School of Communication and Information

Ranita Sharma, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Vincent Silenzio, School of Public Health

Shobha Swaminathan, New Jersey Medical School

We held a virtual core faculty meeting on April 20, 2020, in which we discussed the implications of the pandemic and various efforts underway. These efforts and more are reported in the blog we maintained between March 19 and May 1: [Rutgers Responds to the Coronavirus Outbreak](#). We also reviewed the institute's strategic plan and progress.

Student Council

We formed a student council of 52 undergraduate and graduate students from 19 different schools across the university. The [Rutgers Global Health Institute Student Council](#) represents the student voice at the institute and will work to foster global health collaboration across Rutgers' academic disciplines.

Council members were either recommended by an institute core faculty member or completed a self-nomination questionnaire. Each member will serve on the council for up to two years, and new students will be invited to join each fall. The council's leadership, which is still being determined, will include two co-presidents of the council and 10 committee co-chairs—two for each of the following five committees:

- Career Pathway Awareness
- Global Health Education
- Impact Case Competition
- Rutgers Alumni Engagement
- Student Organization Collaboration

An inaugural student council meeting and welcome reception was held in November 2019 at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary on College Avenue. The event, which allowed members to get to know each other and learn more about the institute's work, featured presentations by institute director Richard Marlink and the student council's faculty advisor, Rutgers Board of Governors Distinguished Professor Mark Robson.

When the pandemic began, the student council formed a COVID-19 task force. Their efforts included working on a mental health survey in collaboration with a faculty mentor, producing [educational videos](#), assisting with [food donations and personal protective equipment](#), collaborating with Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's HIPHOP Promise clinic, and facilitating volunteer efforts for a COVID-19 hotline in Newark.

Rutgers Giving Day

Rutgers Giving Day, originally planned for March 25, 2020, was rescheduled to June 17 due to the timing of the COVID-19 pandemic and its peak in New Jersey. During the 24-hour fundraising event, we raised \$12,600 in support of the Rutgers Global Health Institute Program Fund. This total includes \$10,850 in donations from 179 individuals and \$1,750 in challenge grants:

\$1,000 – Faculty and Staff Challenge (fund within Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences supported by the most faculty and staff)

\$500 – RU Global Challenge (fund with the most international donors between 2 a.m. and 6 a.m.)

\$250 – Scarlet Challenge (one of 20 funds selected based on #RUGivingDay social media activity)

Among the \$10,850 in donations were \$4,200 in matching gifts from members of the Rutgers Global Health Institute Impact Council.

Twelve volunteer ambassadors reached out to friends, family, and colleagues in their own personal and professional networks to encourage others to donate to Rutgers Global Health Institute. They are: Reena Antony, Jack Hemphill, Lara De Meo Hoyt, Arpita Jindani, Jodi Lynch, Richard Marlink, Rohit Mukherjee, Lori Riley, Angela Senger-Mersich, Kinnary Shah, Kim Swann, and Kara Wilson.

Rutgers University Big Ideas Symposium

In response to a challenge that had been issued late in 2018 to Rutgers' 23,000 faculty and staff—to submit “imaginative, disruptive, and visionary proposals for bold initiatives that will positively transform our community and change the world”—we had submitted two proposals during the 2018 – 2019 academic year. Out of the more than 200 proposals submitted, 40 were chosen to be pitched at a symposium before hundreds of community leaders, philanthropists, and innovators. Both of our proposals were among the 40 included in the Rutgers University Big Ideas Symposium, held on October 4, 2019:

No Longer a Death Sentence: Transforming Cancer Care and Prevention in Africa — Together with the Government of Botswana, schools and units across Rutgers, and beyond, Rutgers Global Health Institute aims to help Botswana build the first national, comprehensive cancer care and prevention program in Sub-Saharan Africa. This program will save lives, prevent disease, and create a new model for cancer care in developing countries. Read the [white paper](#).

Rutgers Health Impact and Social Equity in New Jersey (RHISE NJ) — By creating multidisciplinary teams of faculty, clinicians, and students from across Rutgers and community members affected by poor health conditions, RHISE NJ will strive to solve health inequities in New Jersey and beyond. Using a global health approach, this program will create meaningful solutions through innovative, community-based efforts. Read the [white paper](#).

The Rutgers community and leadership are now engaged in a vigorous review of the 40 ideas that were presented at the symposium. Ultimately, 12 ideas will be selected to underpin the universitywide Big Ideas initiative. Others will inform priority-setting initiatives at the chancellor and unit levels.