Teaching a Course on Violent Conflict and Health

Unite For Sight
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My Academic Background

- Trained as an infectious disease epidemiologist

- Research interests:
  - Epidemiology and prevention of HIV/AIDS in U.S, China, Russia and Middle East
  - Research ethics, particularly ethical issues in student-led global health research and research with vulnerable populations
  - Violent conflict, displacement and health
Outline of My Talk

• Why a course on violent conflict and health for MPH Students?

• Course overview:
  “Responding to Violent Conflict: Epidemiological Methods and Public Health Interventions”

• Future directions for my course
Why I Developed this Course?

My motivation was driven by this question:

- How do we as epidemiologists and public health professionals respond to the devastation and human suffering caused by violent conflict (VC) ?
  - Specifically, what can we do to prevent the likelihood of VC and to mitigate its negative health impacts?

- To train a new generation of public health professionals interested in careers in humanitarian health
Violent Conflict and Health Course Objectives

- Apply and evaluate epidemiological methods to analyze and measure population-level health effects of violent conflicts.

- Describe and analyze acute and long-term health consequences of violent conflict with a focus on specific populations; including refugees, internally displaced and other vulnerable populations.

- Describe and evaluate public health interventions in humanitarian settings; identify gaps in evidence and propose areas for further research.

- Identify and analyze ethical challenges of conducting research with conflict-affected populations.

**Course prerequisite:** An introductory course in epidemiology
I - Foundational topics

• Typology of violence
• Violence as a public health problem
• Use of epidemiological methods:
  – Estimating excess mortality in civilians
  – Population-level prevalence estimates of various conflict-related morbidities
  – Sampling strategies for recruiting displaced populations
  – Estimating size of displaced populations
  – Evaluating humanitarian interventions
• Use of qualitative and mixed-methods
• Architecture of humanitarian assistance, UN cluster system and standards
• Ethical dilemmas in conducting research in humanitarian settings and with conflict-affected populations
II - Specific Topics

- Civilian-military coordination in humanitarian response
- Substance use and HIV/AIDS
- Sexual and gender-based violence
- Nutrition and food insecurity
- Mental health issues
- Non-communicable diseases
- Global health diplomacy and health as a bridge to peace
III – Understanding refugee experience
- Refugee resettlement in U.S. – Focus on New Haven
- Meet refugee families in class and hear their stories
- Health of resettled refugees

IV – Case Study
- The Syrian crisis and its public health implications (focus on Lebanon)

V – Table-top Interactive Simulation Exercise
- Responding to Cholera outbreak in Yemen – A simulation exercise
Course Format

• "Active-learning" – seminar style
  - Brief student-led discussion of assigned readings followed by class discussion

• Expert Perspectives:
  - Guest speakers from American University of Beirut (via Skype), Johns Hopkins and elsewhere

• Table-top simulation exercise (Cholera in Yemen)

• Meeting with resettled refugee families in classroom
Develop a detailed, **scientifically rigorous**, **ethically sound** and **feasible** research proposal to be potentially implemented in partnership with a humanitarian organization with conflict-affected populations.

**Goal**: To contribute to evidence-based humanitarian response.
• A pilot study of diabetes care among Syrian diabetic refugees in Lebanon

• A retrospective analysis of diphtheria outbreak among Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September – December, 2017

• The effects of the Israeli/Palestine conflict on child mental health: a mix-methods study

• Reproductive health needs of Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh
Examples of Student Proposals (2)

- Cervical cancer awareness, prevention, and screening for Syrian refugee Women in Jordan’s Zaatari refugee camp
- Assessment of knowledge and attitudes towards refugees and low income Jordanians living with HIV
- An analysis of the mental health of elderly Rohingya refugees in the Palong Khali settlement in Bangladesh
- Evaluation of an ultrasound training program for community health workers and midwives in the Kharaz refugee camp for Somalis displaced to Yemen
Future Directions of the Course

• More focus on **primary prevention** of violent conflict

• Develop a jointly taught course between Yale School of Public Health and a “Frontier University” using remote technology

• Addition of a “field-component” to the course mid-way through the course as well as post-course internship possibility for some students

• Formal partnership with humanitarian organizations
THANK YOU!

For more information, please contact:

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