

EDITOR'S PAGE

Global Health: the Past, the Present and What the Future Holds

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A little more than a decade ago, a global health program was starting to take shape at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Before that time, several clinical departments had been sending groups of faculty, house staff, and sometimes students to low- and middle-income countries around the world, usually to provide much-needed care, sometimes to collaborate on projects related to public health or clinical research. A group of medical students had also started a grassroots initiative called Medical Students Making Impacts, whose stated goal was to enhance student access to high-quality, community-oriented global health experiences. Despite a handful of examples of outstanding sustained work in the field, there was no concerted institutional effort in this arena.

At that time, leaders from the departments of Community Medicine, Pediatrics, Emergency Medicine, and Medical Education banded together to advocate for more institutional support for global health, which has come to be one of the most important trends of the past decade in medicine and medical education. A pivotal point occurred three years later, during an important recruitment session for applicants to our medical school. The Admissions Office asked a junior faculty member who was a member of the global health leadership group to briefly describe our programs to the applicants. She opened by asking a simple question: How many of you are interested in global health as part of your medical school experience? Fully three-fourths of the applicants immediately raised their hands and the dean, who was present, heard their message loud and clear.

The rest, as they say, is history, but it is a history that is worth recounting.

Ten years ago, Mount Sinai was known for clinical and research excellence. There was a growing

interest in public health and public policy, as well as early evidence of some work in human rights and social justice. Mount Sinai was a large, prominent academic medical center on an island that was crowded with prominent academic medical centers. The quality of our medical school was probably in the excellent-to-outstanding category. Mount Sinai recruited superb applicants and provided them with a very high-quality medical education, but, despite being in very good company among our peer schools, we did not stand out from the rest of the pack.

In the ensuing 10 years, something extraordinary happened to both our global health program and our institution, and it is this parallel evolution that is worth noting.

Global health at Mount Sinai has grown from a fledgling, clinically oriented program to what is now a generously funded, well-established presence both nationally and internationally. The junior faculty who rolled up their sleeves and did all the "heavy lifting" back then now have national reputations in their own right. They have developed rigorous academic programs for every level of trainee; focused their energy on trainee experiences that revolve around mentored, longitudinal scholarly projects that provide sustained benefit to the communities we serve; incorporated global health into the curriculum of the medical school; set high standards across the institution for how global health should be practiced; and established key partner sites both within and outside the United States. Our primary interest has been on the needs of our partner communities. That original focus has evolved into collaborative health care capacity-building, both in the United States and at our partner sites, through training local health care workers, assisting with quality improvement initiatives, and role modeling this approach for our trainees.

At the same time, our medical school has risen to be among the best in the country. With groundbreaking curricular innovation, outstanding systems for supporting, mentoring, and advising students, and recruitment programs that have redefined premedical preparation, we are without a doubt the most progressive school in the country. In rethinking the kinds of advanced training opportunities tomorrow's physicians should have, we have partnered with McKinsey & Company, Google X Life Sciences, IBM, and others to provide scholarly experiences that our students can pursue during the course of their time with us. The skills and knowledge they will acquire in working with these organizations will serve them well as they reimagine medical practice, research, public health, and public policy for generations to come.

The medical center has grown into a health system that has one of the largest clinical footprints in the country, and the largest in New York State. Hospital leaders are setting the standard for incorporating safety, quality, and the tenets of the Affordable Care Act into practice. Although the effect of Mount Sinai's high standards for clinical excellence will have a monumental impact in the coming years, the way in which it provides access to high-quality care to all patients in need is our main focus and will be our defining legacy.

The next decade will see these 3 powerful forces merge. Our evolving sophistication in global health;

the passion, intellect, and diverse experiences of our students and house staff; and our exquisitely honed management of millions of lives must intersect in a way that will change how we teach, how we practice, how we bring what we have learned at home to our partners overseas, and how we bring what we are learning from them to better serve our patients at home.

It is precisely during this transformation that we are excited, and privileged, to welcome Prabhjot Singh, MD, PhD, to Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Singh will be the first director of the Arnhold Global Health Institute and brings with him an expansive knowledge of systems of care in communities around the world. He is perfectly positioned to align our existing strength in global health with our rapidly expanding health system and influence in public policy. Our trainees, whose interests and talents are a great testament to what is possible in medicine, will benefit enormously from his forward-looking orientation as he helps us push the boundaries of what we can accomplish together.

These are historic times at Icahn School of Medicine, the Mount Sinai Health System, and the Arnhold Global Health Institute. We are poised to change fundamentally the world we live in for the better, and we are committed to preparing physicians and scientists who will enter society as informed advocates and activists, ready to advance research and clinical care and capable of promoting change.