Nutritional status of school children in plantation sector, Sri Lanka

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Background: Child malnutrition is a major public health and development concern in most of the poor communities leading to high morbidity and mortality. Objective of this Study was to assess the nutritional status of schoolchildren residing in a plantation area in Kandy, Sri Lanka.

Method: A cross sectional study was performed involving children aged between 6 to 12 years in Hanthana tea plantation area, Kandy. Anthropometric parameters of height and weight and were collected by standard procedures to assess Height-for-age (HAZ) BMI-for-age (BAZ) and weight-for-age (WAZ). Anthroplus 1.0.4, Epiinfo 3.5.1, and SPSS version 17softwares used for the analysis of data.

Findings: 283 children with (8.9 ± 1.4SD) years were assessed. Mean HAZ, WAZ and BAZ was -1.35±0.85, -1.94±0.76, -1.84±0.97 respectively. Majority of them were in normal nutritional conditions. 2.5% were over height (2.18±0.10, >2SD HAZ) while 1.4% overweight (2.09±0.10, > 2SD WAZ) and 2.1% obesity (2.23±0.16, > 2SD BAZ). 19.8% were stunted (-2.62±0.58, < - 2SD HAZ), 25.3% underweight (-2.48±0.41, < - 2SD WAZ) and 21.4% wasted (-2.82±0.60, < - 2SD BAZ). The prevalence of each indicator was higher in boys than in girls and the children aged 6-8 years showed the highest prevalence of under nutrition. However, there was no significant association between nutritional status with gender and age.

Interpretation: Child under nutrition remains a public health concern in this community. School health education programs promoting better eating habits and physical growth are need periodically for this community.

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A new workforce for a new era: characteristics of Master of Science in Global Health students

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Background: There are critical shortages of global health providers, and traditional degree programs often do not target all skills essential for global health professionals. MD, RN and MPH degree programs are time intensive and focused on clinical and research skills; global health careers are not the intent of such degrees. The Master of Science in Global Health (MSGH) is a new degree program that focuses on interprofessional competencies and targets non-traditional students, such as working adults and international students. It also allows health, engineering, business and other professionals to gain targeted skills that translate existing degrees to a global context. However, given the recent introduction of such programs, the general characteristics of MSGH students remains unknown.

Methods: Cross-sectional analysis of students in enrolled in an online MSGH program at Northwestern University. Initial student surveys are routinely collected upon admission. De-identified aggregate data was analyzed from student survey responses. Publically available data from comparator degree programs was obtained. Descriptive statistics were utilized to describe the cohort, and Chi-square and Fisher exact tests performed to examine differences between student types.

Findings: Thirty two individuals matriculated during the first six months of the MSGH program, 78% female, median age 30, with 31% being under 25 and 16% being over 45. They identified as being 74% white, 16% Asian, and 10% black. 87% were currently employed; with 58% working in health care, 15% in government or public administration, and under 10% working in education, information technology marketing/sales, hospitality/tourism. Matriculates to Northwestern medical school over the same time frame were 41% female, median age 24 with none being over 45, 37% white, 36% Asian, 13% Hispanic, 6% black. MSGH students were more likely to be female (Chi square p<0.001) and over 45 (Fisher exact p<0.001).

Interpretation: On-line MSGH programs attract students who are different than other traditional degree programs. Notably, the program attracts persons already working in relevant professions who have interest in pursuing global health. This is a potential mechanism to diversify and expand the global health workforce. Further data on the career trajectories of these students will be important.

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Development of a global health program for Kaiser Permanente Northern California Graduate Medical Education program

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Program Purpose: Kaiser Permanente (KP) is the largest non-for-profit pre-paid integrated health care delivery system in the United States. In Northern California, Kaiser Permanente has 21 medical centers, caring for over 3.8 million members by over 7,000 physicians. Kaiser Permanente's Northern California Graduate Medical Education supports 16 distinct residency and fellowship programs, including approximately 400 residents and fellows (of which, 250 positions are KP and eligible to apply to the KP global health program), and over 600 medical student rotations annually. The overall goals of developing and implementing a global health program included, a) provide KP residents and fellows with global health rotations to expand their cultural competency patient care skills, b) enhance KP's external outreach to underserved populations, c) provide KP physicians with teaching rotations as they precept KP residents and fellows.

Methods: In 2008, the Global Health Program Advisory Committee was convened and the global program mission and goals