



COLLEGE OF MEDICINE TUCSON

Global & Border Health

Spring 2025 | Issue No. 6

Global Cats

Global Health Updates from the University of Arizona College of
Medicine- Tucson and Office of Global and Border Health





Focus Article: Arizona Mentor Brings Global View to Training

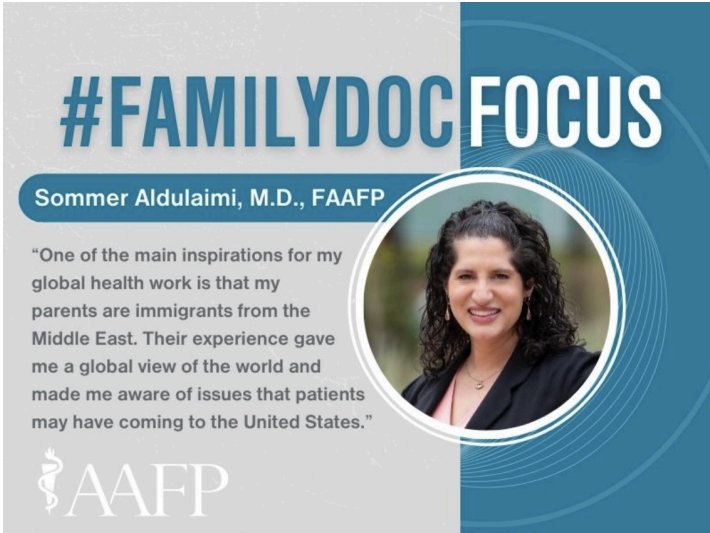
David Mitchell

Dr. Sommer Aldulaimi, M.D., FAAFP, understands the challenges immigrants face while adapting to a new language and culture. Her mother came to the United States from Iran as a child, and her father immigrated from Iraq as a teenager.

“One of the main inspirations for my global health work is that my parents are immigrants from the Middle East,” said, Aldulaimi, co-director of Global Health Programs in the Office of Global and Border Health at the University of Arizona College of Medicine in Tucson. “Their experience gave me a global view of the world and made me aware of issues that patients may have coming to the United States. That started my passion for caring for patients who are marginalized, who are immigrants in general and those who are refugees.”

Aldulaimi planned a career in pediatrics, but a global health rotation in Honduras between her first and second years at the University of Arizona College of Medicine changed her path.

“It showed me that when you’re doing global health work, the broader the training you have the better,” said Aldulaimi, an associate professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and core faculty for the family medicine residency. “If I had done pediatrics, I would be limited and wouldn’t be able to take care of pregnant patients and adult patients. If I decided to do OB, I would be limited to women’s health and wouldn’t be able to take care of newborns. I recognized that I needed broader training for global health work. I love the idea of caring for whole families and being able to care for patients from birth until death in multiple different settings because I like the hospital and clinic. I wanted a job that allowed me to do all those things.”




#FAMILYDOC FOCUS

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AAFP





Aldulaimi started her residency's global health track at the end of her intern year. In addition to Honduras, her travels have taken her to Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico and Tanzania.

AAFP News' #FamilyDocFocus shines a spotlight on family physicians in clinical, academic and administrative roles as well as family medicine-focused residents and medical students who are dedicated to improving the lives of their patients and communities



#FAMILYDOCFOCUS

“I did a lot of research about what the benefit of a global health track would be,” she said. “The goal of our residency program is to care for underserved patients and to fill the gaps in underserved places in the U.S., especially in Arizona and rural and underserved areas. It was clear from the evidence that residents who have global health experiences during their residency are much more likely to practice in underserved areas, both abroad and domestically, so it fit the mission of our program. I still thought I was going to have to try to

convince the faculty. When I presented this evidence, the program director was like, ‘That sounds great. How can I help?’”

In addition to encouragement from then-program director Vic Weaver, M.D., Aldulaimi's idea also got support from Ron Pust, M.D., who was director of the Office of Global and Border Health at the time.


“Residents could go on a global health rotation before, but now it's part of a comprehensive program,” said Aldulaimi, who said residents in the track participate in a global health course and monthly journal clubs. “That is so important is because we want to make sure that residents are adequately prepared to go abroad, both ethically and medically.”

Aldulaimi is an advisory board member for the AAFP's Center for Global Health Initiatives and is a member of the Working Group on Global Health Curriculum, which is a collaborative effort of the Academy and the Society of Teachers of Family Medicine. As a result of that work, aspects of Arizona's global health training track can be found in an STFM global health toolkit designed to guide residency programs in the development of a global health curriculum.

Aldulaimi was in the first class to graduate from the residency's global health track in 2014. A few years later, the University of Arizona's Family Medicine Residency added a clinic for complex refugee patients at its south campus clinic. The program has since expanded to two clinics per month at two locations.

During the AAFP Global Health Summit (a preconference to the Family Medicine Experience) Sept. 22-23 in Phoenix, Aldulaimi and Jerome Koleski, M.D., the other co-director of Arizona's Global Health Programs, will present a breakout session focused on care of complex refugee patients.





“What we’re really hoping for is to be able to give people tools in their toolbox to take better care of more complex refugees that they’re seeing in their own practice,” she said. “How can they better address their issues, and what are things that they need to look out for? What are the more complex issues that refugees may have that other patients may not?”

Residents from multiple specialties and medical students participate in the refugee clinics, which also benefit from a public health intern, a refugee health coordinator and an attorney. Aldulaimi is medical director of the Tucson Family Advocacy Program, the school’s medical-legal partnership.

“We see a lot of refugees in Arizona,” Aldulaimi said. “At one of our clinics, one in every four patients that our residents see are refugees from all over the world. It’s important to train residents to really have a high level of cultural humility and to be able to approach patients from lots of different backgrounds and partner with them. That is something they gain from these experiences.”

The College of Medicine’s Global and Border Health program has grown significantly post-pandemic. Aldulaimi said about 40 medicals students are participating in that program.

“We keep track of what they match into, and our students who do the global health program have a higher rate of matching into primary care specialties than the general population of the College of Medicine,” she said.



“Dr. Aldulaimi exemplifies the tenets of family medicine and the essence of humanity of the medical profession. She is nationally known for creating and establishing a multidisciplinary refugee clinic at our family medicine location on Alvernon Road in Tucson. Her model of care was published in the Family Practice Journal. It is not only a model of care, but a foundation and structure to care for some of the most complex patients in our health system and community.”
- Dr. Kristen Rundell, Professor and Chair of UArizona’s College of Medicine – Tucson’s Department of Family and Community Medicine

 **#FAMILYDOCFOCUS**

Dr. Jaylee Caruso's Experience at the Songambe Hospital in Tanzania

My global health elective at Songambe Hospital in Tanzania was extremely valuable for my training as a family medicine doctor. I had a variety of experiences ranging from inpatient management of severe malaria to intensive care of premature neonates to learning about public health measures to mitigate a cholera outbreak. More than anything, getting to connect with the local clinicians and community members made this rotation one of the highlights of residency.



Global Health Initiatives with Mexzona

Thomas Brower, Cameron Mortazavi, Emma Martinez, and Alex Hitti

As MS1s on the Global Health Distinction track prepare for their first global health externship this summer, it is important to highlight the many opportunities for global health work that can be found closer to home in neighboring border communities. While many Arizonans may be familiar with Puerto Peñasco for its beaches and resorts, perhaps less attention is paid to the significant challenges residents of that community face in accessing healthcare. Many areas of Sonora face obstacles in providing healthcare services with residents traveling long distances to reach the nearest health facility. These healthcare disparities lead to poorer health outcomes for the residents of these regions, something the University of Arizona affiliated Mexzona hopes to address.

Mexzona is a non-profit organization driven to improve health outcomes in the communities of Sonora, Mexico by increasing healthcare accessibility through volunteer work. Students travel down every month to the





communities of Puerto Peñasco and Sonoyta to offer free medical care alongside physicians and healthcare personnel. They operate alongside the Rocky Point Medical Clinics to provide services including pediatrics, general medicine, OB-GYN, ophthalmology, physical therapy, and orthopedics. The Mexzona team is run by pre-medical students from the University of Arizona alongside medical students from four campuses across the state of Arizona. These students donate their time and expertise to help these communities. In doing so, they offer a unique global health opportunity for UA COM-T medical student volunteers to practice their clinical skills in medical interviews and physical examinations while working with physicians to map out differential diagnoses with associated treatment plans for a range of conditions.

Understanding the importance of building bridges to future healthcare providers, the Mexzona team highly values their connection with the undergraduate community at the University of Arizona. They recruit pre-medical students to practice performing triage tasks and interpreter services to provide experiential learning for students interested in medicine. Currently serving as co-presidents on the leadership team for Mexzona are first-year medical students Cameron Mortazavi, Emma Martinez, and Alex Hitti. Each of them shared their thoughts on the importance of Mexzona to the school and to them personally.

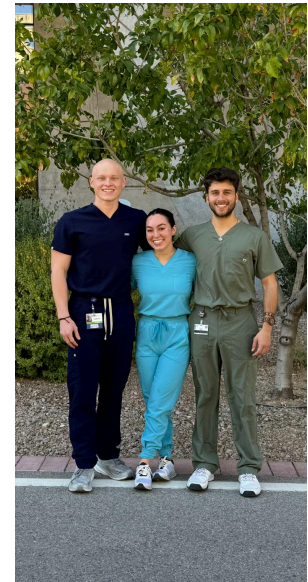


Cameron Mortazavi: I have been volunteering with Mexzona for over 3 years now, attending over 25 clinics. This opportunity has, without a doubt, been the highlight of my pre-medical/medical journey thus far and has allowed me to integrate clinical thinking, interprofessionalism, and foster collaboration with our many volunteers from all walks of life. I highly encourage any and all healthcare professionals interested to get involved in Mexzona. It is an honor and a privilege to share this experience with so many like-minded people and share the love of global health public service to the communities of Sonora, Mexico.



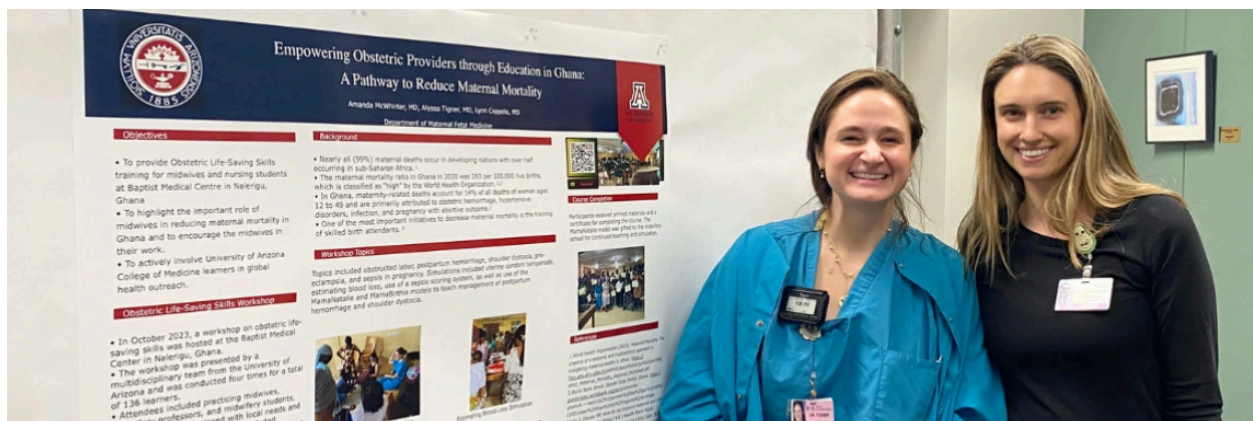
Emma Martinez: Providing high-quality and culturally competent care requires intentionality and teamwork, both of which are explored simultaneously within the opportunities that Mexzona has to offer. In this way, Mexzona is a great way to experience how global health meets community health; both are necessary and each informs the other. It has been an honor to work with the patients, the physicians, and my peers in order to provide healthcare to those residing in Sonora.

Alex Hitti: This is an incredible opportunity for both medical and pre-medical students to gain hands-on experience in global health and develop their clinical skills while serving patients in underserved communities across Sonora. Some of my most memorable moments include learning how to navigate language barriers in a healthcare setting and witnessing the strong sense of community that develops among our volunteers by the end of the trip.



Global Health Research Day Event & Exhibit, Sept. 5, 2024

The College of Medicine-Tucson Global & Border Health and Health Sciences Library hosted an exhibit featuring a series of select research posters created by students, residents, and faculty of the COM-T Global & Border Health program. This program exposes students to high-quality, evidence-based, interdisciplinary clinical and public health care under the resource constraints typically found in developing nations. The exhibit kicked-off with an inaugural Global Health Research Day event at the Health Sciences Library on September 5, 2024. On display through October, scholarly posters showcase the participants' global health work and research achievements. The event promoted global health work, created networking opportunities within the global health community, and inspired more interdisciplinary and interprofessional collaborations.





Keynote Speaker

Theresa Cullen, MD, MS is currently the Public Health Director of Pima County, Arizona. While guiding the county of over one million residents through COVID-19, she developed a strategic approach to emergency preparedness and response, resiliency, and transformational health status change with a goal of health equity. She continues to work closely with Tribal, federal, state and local partners to ensure that community needs are integrated with the goal of health justice. Dr. Cullen, RADM (retired) USPHS, began her family medicine clinical career with Indian Health Service (IHS) and worked in leadership positions for 25 years with American Indian/Alaska Native communities with a goal of improving health status through innovation and data informatics. Dr. Cullen worked as the Chief Medical Information Officer for the Veterans Health Administration from 2012-2015 and Associate Director of Global Health Informatics at the Regenstrief Institute. She has been honored with multiple local, state and national awards including the Distinguished Service Medal, the University of Arizona Medical College Alumni Award, and the AMIA Don Detmer Award for informatics health policy contributions.



Poster Awards

Category	Authors	Poster Title
Faculty	Leahcaren N Oundoh B Jason Brotherton Moses Odiambo Benjamin Thairu Beryl Akinyi Kristina E Rudd	Presentation, management, and outcomes of adults and pediatric patients with traumatic brain injury in a Kenyan hospital
Resident	Amanda McWhirter, MD, PGY2 Alyssa Tigner, MD, chief resident Lynn Coppola, MD	Empowering Obstetric Providers through Education in Ghana: A Pathway to Reduce Maternal Mortality
Student	Max Coffeen MS4 Ahmed Al-Shamari MS4 Cameron Mortazavi MS1	MexZona: A University of Arizona Student-Led Non-Profit to Combat Healthcare Disparities in Mexico



Current News in Global Health

Thomas Brower

Every year close to 400,000 children will be diagnosed with cancer around the world. For context, there are approximately 473 students in the average elementary school in the United States; statistically, at least one of those students is battling cancer. Of these 400,000 new pediatric cancer patients per year, close to 90% live in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). For these patients, the survival rates are less than 30% - compared to ~80% survival rate for pediatric cancer patients in the United States. Lack of medical access remains a major factor contributing to this disparity in survival rates.



Many hospitals in LMICs caring for pediatric cancer patients struggle to maintain stable access to safe and effective medicine for their patients at a reasonable price. This causes both lack of access and lengthy interruptions in treatment, leading to the higher mortality rates for these patients.

To combat this, the WHO and St. Jude's Children Research Hospital created the Global Platform for Access to Childhood

Cancer Medicines in 2021. This program aims to provide quality-assured, safe, effective medicine for pediatric cancer to LMICs at no cost. As of this year, the Global Platform entered the distribution phase for two of its six pilot countries. Both Mongolia and Uzbekistan are receiving the first shipments of these medicines with an expected reach of 5000 children across both countries by the end of the year. The remaining countries in the pilot program, Ecuador, Jordan, Nepal, and Zambia, anticipate entering the distribution phase in the near future. Encouraging changes are already being seen in these countries with Nepal declaring free treatment for pediatric cancer patients up to the age of 14 in anticipation of access to medicine through the Global Platform.

Due to their initial success and in anticipation of future expansion, six additional countries - El Salvador, Ghana, Moldova, Pakistan, Senegal and Sri Lanka - were invited to join the initiative this year. The Global Platform aims to reach 50 countries within the next five to seven years, providing medical treatment for 120,000 children living with cancer in LMICs.



To learn more about this initiative, please visit: [Global Platform for Access to Childhood Cancer Medicines](#)




First-Year Medical Student International Rotations: Summer 2024

Global Experiences in Global Health

Rhen Davis

In the summer of 2024, three students from the UA College of Medicine – Tucson and I, traveled to Trujillo, Peru, for the incredible opportunity of observing clinical medicine abroad with the Vive Perú program. The experience was exciting, rigorous, and informative as we each spread throughout the city for 2 to 6 weeks exploring how various Peruvian physicians run their clinics, operating rooms, emergency departments, and medical education. I spent most of my time in the Hospital Distrital Jerusalén and the Clínica Suarez observing two otolaryngologists while others invested time in other fields such as pediatrics, internal medicine, and labor and delivery. Each day, I stretched my capacity to speak and understand Spanish, especially in medical contexts, and I was profoundly grateful for the interpreters provided by Vive Perú who assisted in my learning and comprehension. An unexpected advantage came with shadowing in this otolaryngology when I realized that my mentoring physicians spoke slower,





louder, and clearer Spanish to patients who were hard of hearing. In these particular visits, I found I had a vastly improved capacity to follow the thread of conversation with my rudimentary language skills!


Beyond language learning, we found comparing Peruvian and American healthcare needs and approaches fascinating and also had time to appreciate local cultural events while living with host families in the community. Of course, we also took advantage of my time in Peru to do some exploring. Several students and I made it to the mountains of Huaráz, and the Sacred Valley of the Incas, and the ruins of Machu Picchu—an awe-inspiring series of adventures. Personally, however, I found the welcoming nature of our Peruvian hosts and new friends to be the crown jewel of the experience. Homemade meals from the mothers of host families, rich conversations with physicians over meals after work, carefully crafted Spanish classes from private instructors, and warm receptions from translation and medical students make me yearn for another chance to return to the country. For students considering a wide array of global experiences, make sure to add Peru to your list!



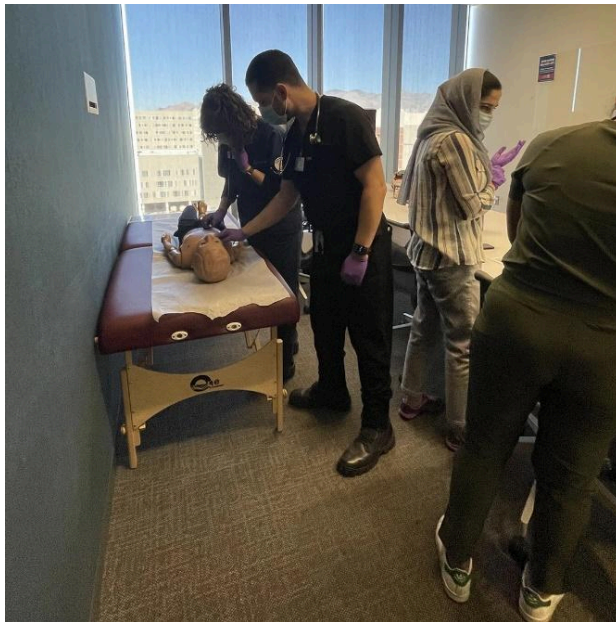
Global Health Interprofessional Event – November 15, 2024

On November 15, 2024, our fourth Global Health Interprofessional Event was held with students from the Colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and Pharmacy. We are happy to report that participation increased this year! The event involved students working in teams in a clinical and public health simulation to develop vital team skills such as communication, constructive intervention, knowledge sharing, and mutual respect. The simulation had





students determining their roles and responsibilities specifically to treating patients in low-resource settings abroad and when addressing a public health issue. It also involved identifying social, psychological, and ethical challenges that may arise when treating an acutely ill patient in these circumstances when the tools needed may not be available. They set about identifying potential obstacles to teamwork during an emergency and understanding how collaboration and teamwork improve the effectiveness of emergency response, especially as it relates to low-resource areas.



How You Can Help!

To donate to global health, go to <https://give.uafoundation.org/com-tuc-family-community>. In the

Your Gift section, for "I would like to support," choose International Health Teaching Program from the pull-down menu.

