



## The George Institute for Global Health becomes a formal affiliate of Peking University Health Science Center

Professor Robyn Norton, Principal Director of The George Institute for Global Health, and Professor Ke Yang, Executive Vice President of Peking University and Peking University Health Science Center, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on October 22nd at the Peking University campus.

Attended by key personnel from both institutions, the signing of the MOU is seen as a significant achievement for The George Institute and Peking University Health Science Center and is the result of more than eight years of collaboration and friendship and two years of negotiations.

"We are thrilled to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Peking University Health Science Center. This has been a major goal for The George Institute not just in China but as a global

organization," said Professor Robyn Norton, Principal Director of The George Institute for Global Health.

But it goes beyond a legal agreement between these two organizations she added.

Norton "Signing this MOU benefits more than just these two organizations it will benefit the people of China and potentially millions of others around the world suffering from chronic diseases. This is what motivates the work of both The George Institute and Peking University Health Science Center and we look forward to working together on the globe's most pressing health issues."

The MOU will allow The George Institute to apply for government funding and grow a larger local network within China between academics, healthcare workers, government, and the public. Qualified staff will also be given

academic appointments at Peking University Health Science Center to further link the two together and provide an avenue for more interaction with Peking University Health Science Center staff and the Institute's extensive international expertise.

After signing the MOU, The George Institute was renamed The George Institute for Global Health at Peking University Health Science Center to illustrate the affiliation.

The MOU signing ceremony was part of the celebrations for the 100th Anniversary of Peking University Health Science Center and was followed by the Third Peking University Child and Adolescent Health Symposium, jointly hosted by the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health and The George Institute for Global Health at Peking University.



## The George Institute, China and Guanghua Foundation form partnership to improve health

As part of The George Institute, China's long-term commitment to improving the health of millions of Chinese, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Guanghua Foundation in the spring of this year in Beijing.

The Guanghua Foundation is one of the top public health charities in China, ranking number one among public health charities in 2010. As part of the Central Communist Youth League, they have a major focus on Chinese adolescents and their health.

Professor Stephen MacMahon, Principal Director of the George Institute for Global Health, signed the Memorandum of Understanding on May 29 with Ren Jinyang, President and Secretary General of the Guanghua Foundation.

"We expect this partnership to be very beneficial to not just directly to The George Institute and Guanghua, but more broadly for the people of China, particularly young people and people living in rural areas."

This new partnership between The George Institute, China and the Guanghua Foundation will focus on raising funds to support public health research around four themes: rural health, adolescent health, development of new and inexpensive technologies to improve health, and capacity building for Chinese public health professionals.

## Fourth Annual Forum on Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Policy Roundtable in Xi'an

International and local experts in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) assembled in the historical home of the Terracotta Warriors in Xi'an in Shaanxi Province, China, for the Fourth Annual Chronic Disease Forum for the Prevention and Management of Chronic Diseases and the Health Policy Roundtable.

Key speakers from around the world presented on topics ranging from the latest available data on the burden of death and disease in China to innovative health data tracking systems in Abu Dhabi and community-based initiatives in the USA.

"Our discussions reached a consensus on the top three priorities for prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

These priorities are tobacco control, salt reduction and preventing and controlling other risk factors such as high blood pressure and obesity," said Professor Lijing L. Yan, Deputy Director at The George Institute, China and Director of the China International Center for Chronic Disease Prevention.

Professor Stephen MacMahon from The George Institute for Global Health, Dr. Michael O'Leary from the WHO, Dr. Michael Engelgau of the US CDC, Dr. Eric Peterson from Duke University, and Chinese Ministry of Health representatives focused heavily on tobacco control and called for more stringent measures in tobacco control as well as more community education to cut down on chronic illness in China.

In addition to the Forum and the Roundtable, delegates visited local villages participating in the China Rural Health Initiative, also known as LifeSeeds, to see firsthand how the project is implemented on the ground. Local capacity building activities, including lectures and scientific trainings, were also held at Xi'an Jiaotong University throughout the week.

Jointly hosted by The China International Center for Chronic Disease Prevention, The George Institute for Global Health, China, and Xi'an Jiaotong University, the event was also sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and UnitedHealth Group.



## Children are key to salt reduction in China

The Medical Research Council (MRC) of the United Kingdom awarded funding to The George Institute, China to work with Chinese children to reduce the amount of salt they and their families consume. The goal is to create healthy habits at a young age through educating children to become "low-salt ambassadors" in their own families and communities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends no more than 5 grams of salt per day, but recent studies show that consumption is around 12- 14 grams per day among adults in China. However, there is no reliable data around how much salt children are consuming, nor is there any strategy in place to reduce their salt intake.

The MRC-funded project is a randomized controlled trial to test whether an education program for school children can lower the amount of salt they and their families consume. This represents

an important shift in thinking about how to improve public health outside of the health system itself by harnessing the existing education system to create positive health changes in children.

"Health programs are no longer confined to the healthcare system – we have to look at other important areas of a person's life to find new ways of addressing health problems, and we need to do it as early as possible to create those healthy habits early on. Education is a universally key area and an ideal platform for a positive impact on health," said Professor Wu, Executive Director of The George Institute, China and an investigator on the study.

The study involves an international collaboration of top salt reduction and chronic disease experts led by Dr Feng He with the Wolfson Institute at Queen Mary, University of London. Other Investigators on the project include Professor



Graham MacGregor, Chairman of WASH (World Action on Salt and Health) along with The George Institute's Professor Yangfeng Wu and Professor Lijing L. Yan among other local and international experts.

The study began in September of this year and is expected to be conducted in two phases with primary school children between the ages of 7 and 11 and their parents and grandparents in Changzhi, Shanxi province. The study also investigates what the current intake of salt among children actually is using reliable and high quality methods, and is projected to be completed in the summer of 2014.

## Fellowship and Internship Opportunities

The China International Center for Chronic Disease Prevention has a strong fellowship program for visiting fellow, scholars, and students to get hands-on experience in international public health. This year, the center hosted KaWing Cho, a fourth year medical student from Columbia University, USA, and Matt Sebranek, a candidate for his Master of Science in Global Health degree at Duke University, USA.

KaWing Cho has been with The George Institute, China since December of 2011. KaWing took a year off from his medical studies specializing in pediatrics at Columbia University in the US to better understand the health issues faced in China and what is being done to address them.

He has worked on two key projects in the Center: the Simplified Cardiovascular Management Study (SimCard) in Tibet, China, and the Medical Students' Lifestyles and Attitudes towards Preventive Counseling (MedLife)

study. SimCard is using simplified management tools for local village doctors in resource poor areas of Tibet, and the MedLife study is investigating the prevalence of healthy lifestyles and how it affects medical students' attitudes on preventive counseling.

KaWing sees his time with The George Institute as fundamental to his future plans in pediatrics, both in the USA and in China.

"Long term, I want to be a clinical pediatrician seeing children and adolescents on a regular basis. However, I'm very keen on maintaining a foot in the research realm and hope to be able to devote time to public health research in China relating to the pediatric population. Though adult chronic diseases in China have gained widespread attention and rightfully so, China's pediatric population continues to face certain health challenges, from asthma to obesity, that still need to be addressed."

Matt Sebranek joined The George

Institute, China as a Visiting Research Fellow from the Duke Global Health Institute (DGHI) from May through August in 2012. Originally from La Crosse, Wisconsin, USA, Matt is currently working on his Master of Science in Global Health degree at Duke University. At The George, Matt worked with KaWing Cho and other researchers at the Center on the seed grant project MedLife.

Working at the Center and The George Institute, China has taught Matt the importance of working on a strong international team.

"The most important thing I have learned during my time in China is that working with an international team of researchers is undoubtedly rewarding and beneficial. We are able to learn from each other and build on each other's strengths and weaknesses while working towards a common goal. It is this team work and partnership that I believe is the key to tackling important issues in global health and chronic disease prevention," he said.

## Taking Action: A Student's Day in the Life of the LifeSeeds study

By Chen Hui, an undergraduate student studying Stomatology in Changzhi Medical College

College life with only textbooks and classrooms undoubtedly gets boring and tedious, so visiting one of the villages in rural China where the LifeSeeds study is taking place added some much needed color to my college experience. More importantly, I was confronted with the current status of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in China for the first time and I was not prepared.

Conducting epidemiological surveys is different from clinical practice. We don't always see the clinical manifestation in a survey – the stroke or the heart attack – mainly just the symptoms. We are not seeing the constant come and go of life and death during an epidemiological survey either. What we do observe are the lives of people in motion, as it happens. We have to capture their lives in our surveys and in our databases. We use questionnaires, interviews, and body measurements as data and strive to keep a high level of quality control to achieve one goal – accurate and reliable data. At the evening meetings at the end of a long day, we are reminded to be rigorous in our work and that collecting inaccurate data will not give us the information that we need to better understand a problem or a solution.

Experiencing LifeSeeds also gave me the opportunity to learn from experienced professors and researchers how to handle difficult patients, logistic problems with local team members, less than perfect survey conditions, and how to communicate what and why we are doing the work we are doing. When participants understand what you are trying to achieve and the significance of the survey, the whole process is so

much easier. Above all, I understand the meaning of a LifeSeeds experience – to make change happen!

During my trip, the oath I took when I first entered medical studies echoes in my ears. Before LifeSeeds, I thought of epidemiological investigations as a mere tool for scientific research, something outside the day-to-day clinical world. However, interacting with the villagers participating in LifeSeeds showed me that it is not as simple as that.

In class, hypertension is one chapter in our textbook and nothing more than a three hour basic theory course. We just see numbers on charts, but I didn't really experience what is behind those numbers until I made a site visit with LifeSeeds. The worst part is, many of these people don't realize that they have the disease, and even those who do are not receiving the treatment they need. They don't know how to prevent hypertension, or what hypertension can do to their health. That is what LifeSeeds is trying to change. By educating people on simple messages – eat less salt, eat more fruits and vegetables, exercise regularly, quit smoking – and by training local village doctors to manage the hypotension in their own villages, we can begin to turn the tide against NCDs and ensure a longer, healthier future for China.

My experience working with the staff and villagers working on LifeSeeds put my medical studies in perspective, and gave me a much more profound understanding of what practicing medicine and conducting public health research can do for the future. It's an experience I won't forget.



## Professor Lijing L. Yan now Deputy Director at The George Institute, China



Professor Lijing L. Yan, Director of the China International Center for Chronic Disease Prevention, has been promoted to Deputy Director of The George Institute for Global Health, China. She is also an adjunct associate professor at the Department of Preventive Medicine, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University, Chicago, and the Health Economics and Management Institute, Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, Beijing. Professor Yan will continue to be a leader and active contributor a multitude of research at The George Institute, as well as foster increased international collaboration between The George and other stakeholders in government, academics, and the private sector.

## The George Institute, China welcomes visitors from around the world

Una O'Brien CB, Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health, and staff from the British Embassy in Beijing visited The George Institute for Global Health, China's offices in August in Beijing. Ms. O'Brien met with Professor Yangfeng Wu, Professor Linong Ji, Professor Lijing L. Yan and Professor Puhong Zhang from The George Institute to discuss the burden of NCDs in China and what China and the UK can learn from each other's experiences. Her visit to The George Institute, China was an opportunity to learn more about the Institute's work in health systems research and NCD prevention and control, especially in regards to diabetes and how the Institute transforms interventions that we know work into real world, low-resource settings.

August 15, 2012



July 5, 2012

The George Institute, China was proud to welcome Dr. Michael O'Leary, WHO Representative for China and Dr. Mukundan Pillay, Senior Health Advisor, to our Beijing offices in July. The meeting was a follow-up to discussions at the 4th Annual Chronic Disease Forum and Health Policy Roundtable in Xi'an in May. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss our areas of interest and expertise, and ways that we might work together in the future.

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## Global Collaboration Activities

August 1, 2012

Professor Lijing Yan attended the inaugural meeting of the Global Health Policy Summit as a panelist on the NCD panel on August 1 at the prestigious Guildhall Palace in the City of London. Hosted by Professor the Right Honourable Lord Darzi of Denham, Chair of the Institute of Global Health Innovation at Imperial College London, the meeting brought together 250 key decision makers working in healthcare from over 25

countries including British Prime Minister David Cameron, senior government officials, academics, and some of the most influential business leaders worldwide.



September 20-22, 2012

Two research fellows from the China Center of Excellence presented posters at the 35th Annual Scientific Meeting of the Japanese Society of Hypertension in Nagoya, Japan. Danielle Millican presented a poster on a salt substitute meta-analysis

and its effects on blood pressure and Jing Zhang displayed a poster on the prevalence, awareness, treatment, and control of hypertension in older adults in rural Northern China.

October 22, 2012



The Third Peking University Child and Adolescent Health Symposium was jointly hosted by the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health and The George Institute for Global Health at Peking University. Local and international experts in adolescent health, including Professor Robyn Norton and Professor Yangfeng Wu from The George Institute for Global Health, discussed ongoing and future work to ensure a healthy future for the children of China.

October 29, 2012

The George Institute for Global Health at Peking University Health Science Center hosted the Symposium on e-Health and NCD Control on October 29, 2012 at Peking University. Professor Stephen MacMahon, Professor Lijing Yan, and Dr. David Peiris for The George Institute for Global Health were among the speakers that included academics, government, and industry covering a broad spectrum of innovations in technology specifically addressing health.

