

11-2020

Institute of Public Health Newsletter- Volume1, Issue 3

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Recommended Citation

(IPH) - CMHS, Institute of Public Health, "Institute of Public Health Newsletter- Volume1, Issue 3" (2020).
Institute of Public Health Newsletter (IPHNL). 4.
<https://scholarworks.uaeu.ac.ae/iphnl/4>

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Institute of Public Health Newsletter

Welcoming Message

Dr. Rami H. Al-Rifai – Chief Editor, Institute of Public Health Newsletter, Assistant Professor of Epidemiology



By taking over the role of the Chief Editor of the Institute of Public Health Newsletter (IPHNL), with immense pleasure, I warmly welcome you all to the third issue of the IPHNL.

Amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that harvested, so far, over 1.26 million lives worldwide, the implemented non-pharmaceutical public health countermeasures including social distancing, hand-washing, and wearing facemask were the superior and successful interventions contributed to averting millions of morbidities and thousands of deaths. The public health and epidemiology researches were in the lead of informing and guiding countries' health policy and decision-makers. These types of researches are able to estimate and track changes in the burden of diseases, identify risk factors and high-risk populations, provide further evidence-based prevention and protection recommendations, and advising future researches and health policies. The well-established scientific and technical research capacity and experience of the faculty members at the Institute of Public Health (IPH) was the key to success behind designing of and invitation by many local and international researchers and organizations to contribute as leading investigators or co-investigators, so far, in more than 30 ongoing epidemiological and clinical studies on COVID-19.

In this issue, we are delighted to share with you a wide range of news and activities covering the IPH teaching, research productivity and research grants, international meetings and collaborations, signed Memorandum of Understandings, consultancy and training service, interviews with and messages from our MPH and PhD alumni, IPH webinar series, social news, The Mutaba'ah Study, world public health awareness days, in addition to other very interesting news that deserves to be shared with you.

Our, the IPH family members, heartiest welcome goes to our readership. I hope you would enjoy reading IPHNL.

The Institute of Public Health (IPH) has a mission to train health professionals and protect and improve the health of the population of the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Faculty members at the IPH have considerable research experience and expertise in different scientific disciplines, including Epidemiology, Biostatistics, Infectious Diseases, Public Health and Preventive Medicine, Environmental Health, Cardiovascular diseases and other chronic health problems, Injury Prevention, Occupational Safety and Health, Health Economics, Health Promotion and Healthcare Management.

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Special Points of Interest

- IPH meetings and collaborations
- Mutaba'ah Study
- IPH webinars
- International Awareness Days

IPH Latest News & Activities

Collaborative meeting on commercial determinants of health

Institute of Public Health (IPH) and the George Washington University in Washington DC, USA (GWU)

On September 30, 2020, a preliminary collaborative meeting was held between the IPH and the Center on Commercial Determinants of Health (CCDH) at Milken Institute of Public Health, GWU.

Prof. Michal Grivna (Director of the IPH) and faculty members at the IPH (Prof. Syed Shah, Dr. Rami H. Al-Rifai - top photo) have had a promising discussion with Prof. Adnan Hyder (Associate Dean for Research GWU, Director of the CCDH) and the faculty members at the CCDH (bottom photo). The discussion revolved around collaborative opportunities in research and training courses related to the “**Commercial Determinants of Health**”. Further follow up meetings will continue in the near future.



Teleconference meeting with Department of Health (DoH)

On October 19, 2020, a teleconference meeting was held between Dr. Rami Beiram, Assistant Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, Prof. Michal Grivna and Dr. Mohamed El Sadig from the Institute of Public Health at CMHS, and a delegation from the Department of Health – Abu Dhabi (DoH) to discuss potentials for collaboration between the IPH and DoH on ‘Health Technology Assessment (HTA)’ of new and existing health technology, healthcare measures or interventions under consideration by DoH, to inform policy decision making at the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, UAE. The meeting introduced the DoH team to the capabilities and expertise of the IPH in the field of HTA, including its expertise in undertaking meta-analysis and systematic reviews to establish clinical evidence, economic evaluation to estimate cost-effectiveness analysis of new health technology, supported with sensitivity analysis, together with the projection and evaluation of the social and ethical impact of new health technology on the UAE population. The IPH team will provide the DoH with a detailed proposal for undertaking HTA for further discussions.

Meeting with SEHA on nursing research and graduate training

On October 22, 2020, Prof. Michal Grivna and Dr. Iffat Elbarazi met a delegation from SEHA Corporate Office (Nursing Division) to discuss the collaboration in graduate education, training, and research. They also debated possible partnership in organizing health promotion webinars.

Meeting with Early Childhood Authority

Prof. Michal Grivna and Dr. Luai A. Ahmed held a meeting on October 27th upon request of the newly established Early Childhood Authority (ACE) Abu Dhabi to discuss future collaboration. ECA would like to collaborate with IPH as a knowledge partner, drawing on data and studies from the UAE and the region on ECD related aspects of health, nutrition, and child protection. The participants discussed the possibilities of translating research outcomes from the *Mutaba’ah* study (a cohort of mother and child) to the policy action and interventions.

Collaboration with Dubai Corporation for Ambulatory Services

By Dr Mohamed El Sadig

Following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Arab Emirates University (UAEU) and the Dubai Corporation for Ambulatory Services (DCAS), dated October 9, 2019; a series of meetings were held between the IPH of the College of Medicine & Health Sciences at UAEU and Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services (DCAS), to translate the MOU between the two parties into action.



Thus far, a Joint Scientific Committee between IPH and DCAS has been established to oversee the development of scientific research, using DCAS database, with the objective to enhance the research capacity in Dubai and the UAE. The Research Committee is responsible of determining research priority areas/topics, research ethics procedures, propriety confidentiality procedures, research fund sources and research implementation, using the DCAS database. DCAS and the IPH will hold regular meetings to oversee the progress of collaborative research between the two parties.

World Congress on Public Health (WCPH) – 2020

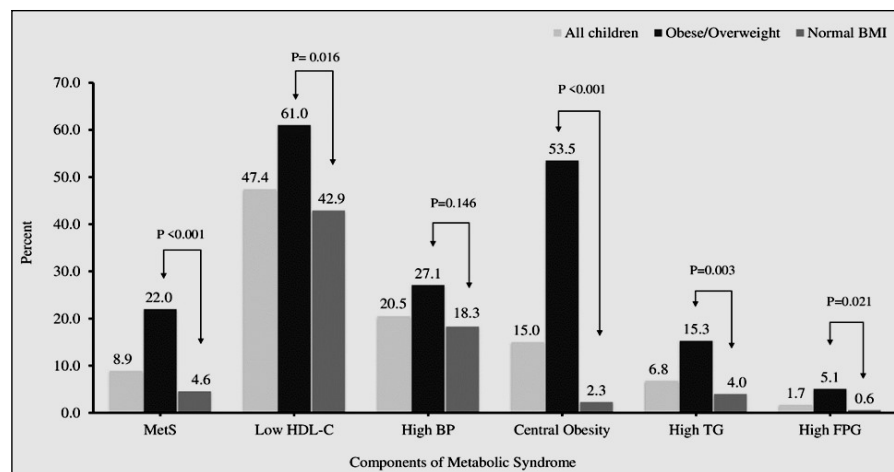
Delegates from the IPH attended virtually the “16th World Congress on Public Health” that was supposed to take place in Rome, Italy under the theme “Public health for the future of humanity: analysis, advocacy and action”. It was an excellent platform to discuss current public health issues affecting humanity and the world, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The congress was attended by 3,600 participants. Throughout the conference there were various posters presented, plenary sessions, debates, round table discussions, live and recorded sessions, and workshops. The congress was sponsored by the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA), Italian Society of Hygiene, Preventive Medicine and Public Health and the European Public Health Association (EUPHA).



Obesity and cardio-metabolic disease risk factors in elementary school children, aged 6 to 11 years in United Arab Emirates

By Prof Syed Shah

Cardiovascular diseases and type 2 diabetes are leading causes of premature mortality. The recent COVID-19 epidemic has disproportionately affected those with obesity, type 2 diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. Prof. Shah and his team of researchers collaborated with their partners at Harvard and Aga Khan Universities to study obesity and its relationship with cardio-metabolic disease risk factors in elementary school children in Al Ain, UAE (Pediatric Diabetes 2020). The key findings of this research have been highlighted in the following figure, showing high burden of risk factors for cardiometabolic diseases among overweight and obese children as compared to their counterparts with normal body mass index (less than 85th percentiles according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC-2000) growth charts. Studies have confirmed that type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases appear later in life (adults), but roots are laid down at an early age. Urgent attention is needed for primordial and primary prevention of these risk in elementary school children to ensure a healthy tomorrow.



Highlight of the month

August

Dr. Iffat Elbarazi
Assistant Professor



Welcome to our new Assistant Professor Dr. Iffat Elbarazi, who has joined the IPH since August 2020. Dr. Iffat has earned a Doctorate in Public Health from Flinders University, South Australia. Prior to joining the IPH, Dr. Iffat, served in different roles including patient care, education and research. She has an extensive experience in public health/health promotion and tracked publications on qualitative research.

September

New IPH baby!



The IPH family members congratulate Dr. Marilia Silva Paulo, on her new baby boy "David" and wish her and the baby the best of luck in this beautiful world.

Interview with Dr Abderrahim Oulhaj

Ismail Elkonaisi (IK): *Can you please tell us about yourself?*

Dr. Abderrahim Oulhaj (AO): I am an Associate Professor in Biostatistics at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences (UAE University). I am also the Coordinator of the PhD program at the Institute of Public Health. I hold an MSc and a PhD degree in statistics from the University College of London (2003, Belgium).

During my PhD studies in Belgium, I had the opportunity to work as a teaching assistant in statistics for almost 8 years. After completing my PhD program, I worked as a Post-doc researcher on neural network modelling for almost one year. Then, a golden opportunity was offered to me to work at Oxford University, which of course I couldn't resist to.

I moved to Oxford in 2004, where I worked as a senior medical statistician for almost 10 years before joining the UAEU. I had my first job at Oxford University as the lead statistician for the Oxford Project to Investigate Memory and Ageing (OPTIMA). Afterwards, I moved to the Diabetes Trial Unit (DTU, Oxford University) where I was the lead statistician for the multinational study 'EXenatide Study of Cardiovascular Event Lowering (EXSCEL)', the results of which were recently published in the New England Journal. In 2013, I decided to move with my family to the UAE where I started my job as an Assistant Professor in Biostatistics at the UAE University.

IK: *Why did you choose the specialty of biostatistics?*

AO: My decision of choosing biostatistics to be my profession was made a long time ago when I obtained my Baccalaureate degree. I was one of the luckiest students to be admitted to one of the most prestigious public schools in Morocco: "The National Institute of Statistics and Applied Economics" where only around 50 students are admitted yearly at a national level. My passion for (Bio)statistics started at that time, and it was magnified by my passion to Mathematics. This was the main motivation for choosing this carrier.



IK: *Would you please tell us about your most important achievements?*

AO: I feel so lucky joining the UAE University. I managed to achieve many objectives from education, research and community services point of view. One of my important achievements from educational point of view is that I was able to communicate and transmit difficult topics and knowledge in biostatistics to students smoothly, and, without requiring any mathematical background. From research point of view, I am very happy to be able to publish many papers in top scientific peer-reviewed journals. My papers have over 1640 citations according to SCOPUS. I also managed to file a patent in the field of Alzheimer's disease with Oxford University.

Regarding the service to the community, I have been actively involved in providing statistical support to different members of the community. I am also happy to be involved in many committees at the CMHS and UAEU level. More importantly, I feel proud to be an active member of many governmental committees related to COVID-19 such as: The IRB committee for COVID-19, The Data and Safety Monitoring Board for COVID-19 and The Therapeutic and clinical trials committee. I also feel happy to be able to contribute to the development of two UAE national guidelines on Cardio-vascular Disease with the Department of Health Abu Dhabi (DoH), namely: The DOH program Service Requirement for the Provision of Cardiovascular Risk Factors Screening and Follow-up (Published in 2018) and the periodic comprehensive screening program questionnaire for Department of Health (DOH)- Abu Dhabi (Published in 2018).

IK: *What are your plans for future?*

AO: My plans for the future is to keep carrying on publishing more interesting research, help the community by providing more statistical support and include new technologies in my educational activities.

IK: *Would you please tell us about your daily working schedule?*

Interview with IPH–PhD student

Laila Al Alawi

Ismail Elkonaisi (IK): *What is your educational background?*

Laila Al Alawi (LA): My Bachelor's degree was in Biology Sciences with a focus on Animal Biology. I then went on to do a Master's in Environmental Sciences from the College of Medicine and Health Sciences at the United Arab Emirates University.

IK: *What do you like best at the IPH?*

LA: The atmosphere at the IPH, the College of Medicine and Health Sciences and UAE University is extremely friendly and welcoming. I found the IPH a supportive learning environment, which affected positively my personal and academic development. Institute members are always dedicated, consistently well-versed in Public Health knowledge and skills, and always willing to point the students in the right direction.

IK: *Why did you choose to enroll in the doctoral program in Public Health?*

LA: My passion is occupational health and safety. As I am working at the Department of Health Abu Dhabi as a Manager of Environment, Health and Safety Department. The role of the department is to supervise the implementation of the Abu Dhabi Occupational Safety and Health framework in the Health sector. Thus, in order to gain the technical knowledge related to this field, I decided to join the doctoral program at UAE University with a major in Occupational Health. It seemed to be the best investment in myself, my career, and my country.

IK: *What is the focus of your doctoral thesis research?*

LA: My thesis is on the exposure and handling practices of healthcare professionals for

AO: I divide my time in teaching undergraduate and post-graduate programs at the UAEU, supervising PhD and Master students and working on many research activities as well as consulting with healthcare professionals. My research field is the statistical modeling in the medical and health fields especially in Diabetes, Cardio-vascular diseases, Alzheimer's diseases, COPD, Cancer and recently COVID-19.

cytotoxic drugs in the workplace environment. To our knowledge, this is the first study in the UAE, allowing us to investigate the levels of knowledge, attitudes and practices of healthcare workers at Abu Dhabi's hospitals in handling cytotoxic drugs and to assess the potential workplace contamination of the oncology departments of AD with the most widely used cytotoxic drugs. Dr. Elpidiforos Soteriades, my thesis advisor, has been pivotal in refining my research topic and ensuring that appropriate methodology followed. It is also worth mentioning that the outcomes of this research would be beneficial for the health sector and community.

IK: *Where do you see yourself after graduation?*

LA: I will return to my work at the Department of Health Abu Dhabi. I hope to continue working in the field of occupational health and safety and supervise the implementation of the Abu Dhabi Occupational Safety and Health framework in the Health sector in an innovative approach. Ultimately, I have learned a lot in my PhD journey, but I'm looking for the next step where I can continue to grow, put the technical skills I've honed into practice and develop my skills even further.

IK: *What is your message to future doctoral students at the IPH?*

LA: My advice would be it's very important to look at your doctoral studies as an opportunity for professional development. Stay focused and work toward what you want to accomplish. Remember that your PhD is a learning experience. The more skills/experiences you can gain outside of your narrowly focused research project, the better suited you will be for your future career. Lastly, you have to be able to balance your social life and your PhD studies.

Highlight of the month

October

Mr Abubaker Hasan



Welcome to our new instructor in Biostatistics Mr. AbuBaker who has joined the IPH in October 2020. Mr. AbuBaker, holds a master's degree in statistics from the University of Khartoum with extensive experience of more than 3 years in biostatistics.

October

Dr Balász Adam



Welcome to Dr. Balász Adam, our new Associate Professor in occupational and environmental health. Dr. Adam is an occupational physician with MD and Ph.D. degrees (Occupational genotoxicology). He has completed an MSc in Occupational Health at the University of Birmingham, UK. Dr. Adam is a Fellow of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland and a Member of the European Association of Environmental and Occupational Medicine. He is an expert of the World Health Organization and an official member of EU Cost Action projects in Network on the Coordination and Harmonization of European Occupational Cohorts.

The Mutaba'ah Study

Principal Investigator: Dr Luai A. Ahmed

The Institute of Public Health at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences pioneered the first and largest mother and child health cohort study, Mutaba'ah (meaning: follow up) in the UAE. Mutaba'ah aims to secure longitudinal epidemiological data on maternal and child health to investigate the health determinants and outcomes of the mothers, and the maternal and early-life health determinants and outcomes of infants, children and adolescents.

The Mutaba'ah Study aims to recruit 10,000 pregnant women from the Emirati population and follow them throughout pregnancy and their offspring for an initial period of 16 years. Recruitment started in October 2017 at three major hospitals in Al Ain. Data on many relevant exposures and health outcomes during pregnancy, delivery and ahead is collected using sequential questionnaires & from the medical records of the mothers & their babies after birth.

The Mutaba'ah Study will investigate relationships between different exposures and health outcomes; for instance, lifestyle, behavioural, environmental, socioeconomic and demographic factors, conditions like maternal weight gain, gestational diabetes, premature birth, pre-eclampsia, caesarean delivery, birth complications, birth weight, malformations, breastfeeding, infant growth, development, childhood obesity, asthma, diabetes, injuries, cognitive function, mental health, etc.

The Mutaba'ah Study will provide a long-standing scientific platform for maternal and child health research in the UAE. The study will initiate and constitute a data repository for researchers to relate different health outcomes of the mother and the child to a variety of maternal and early-life exposures. It will provide novel research-based local evidences of the burden, risks, and projections of maternal and child health. These evidences can be translated into health policies and practices to improve the motherhood and childhood health status and services, and to guide future plans for health services and expenditures in the UAE. Ultimately, the Mutaba'ah Study aims to have a crucial impact on the health and quality of life of the Emirati population.

The Mutaba'ah Study in numbers (up-to-date):

Recruitment progress

7,800 pregnant women
3 hospitals

Scientific output

3 articles published
7 manuscripts under review
21 conference presentations

Contributors

16 co-investigators and collaborators
3 collaborating universities

Students' involvement

1 PhD completed
4 PhD in progress
4 undergraduate students



Updates since the last newsletter

Dr Nasloon Ali, the Mutaba'ah Study's first PhD student has successfully defended her thesis on April 16th, 2020. Her research was on recurrent miscarriage among the Mutaba'ah participants and its effect on their index pregnancy outcomes and behaviors. Her thesis is available in the UAEU libraries.

The Mutaba'ah study is also humbled by the provision of a 3.2 million dirhams grant to study how artificial intelligence can assist in enhancing data quality and clinical decision making in hospitals for pregnant women.

We have published an exciting new manuscript on antenatal care initiation among our participants. Read more at: <https://rb.gy/blt9lz>



Contact the Mutaba'ah team at:

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Scientific publications by IPH members (June – October, 2020)

PhD students' names are bolded

Rahma A., Elsheik M., Elbarazi I., Ali B., Patrinos G., Kazim M., Alfalasi S., Ahmed LA., and AlMaskari F. *Knowledge, Attitude, and Perceived Barriers toward Genomic Medicine and Pharmacogenomics among Healthcare Workers in the United Arab Emirates*. Journal of Personalized Medicine. Nov 2020. doi: 10.3390/jpm10040216.

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Ali N., Elbarazi I., Alabboud S., Al-Maskari F., Loney T., and Ahmed LA. *Antenatal Care Intention Among Pregnant Women in the United Arab Emirates: The Mutaba's Study*. Frontiers in Public Health. 2020 June 11. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2020.00211.

Ali N., Elbarazi I., Ghazal-Aswad S., Al-Maskari F., Al-Rifai RH., Oulhaj A., Loney T., and Ahmed LA. *Impact of recurrent miscarriage on maternal outcomes in subsequent pregnancy: The Mutaba'ah Study*. International Journal of Women's Health. Oct 2020. In Press.

AlMahmoud T., Elkonnaisi I., Grivna M., and Abu-Zidan F. *Personal protective eyewear usage among industrial workers in small-scale enterprises*. Injury epidemiology. 2020 Sep 22. doi: 10.1186/s40621-020-00280-z.

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GBD 2019 Demographics Collaborators (Elbarazi I.) *Global age-sex-specific fertility, mortality, healthy life expectancy (HALE), and population estimates in 204 countries and territories, 1950–2019: a comprehensive demographic*. Lancet 2020.

GBD 2019 Viewpoint Collaborators (ElBarazi I., Grivna M.). *Five insights from the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019*. Lancet 2020; 396:1135-59.

GBD 2019 Risk Factors Collaborators (Elbarazi I., Grivna M.). *Global burden of 87 risk factors in 204 countries and territories, 1990-2019: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2019*. Lancet, 2020; 396: 1223-49.

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Research training and consultancy service

Advance your knowledge and research capacity by consulting and collaborating with our well-established research experts at the Institute of Public Health (IPH). Our experts are graduates of top universities, equipped with strong expertise in scientific researches designing and execution, and with tracked records of publications in top international peer-reviewed journals. The IPH welcomes invitations for consultancies in research design and execution, biostatistics and data analysis including systematic reviews and meta-analysis, local and international collaboration, and designing and delivering training courses and workshops including, but not limited to, biostatistics, quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, scientific writing, and publication skills. We have designed and delivered several workshops and training courses. To access profiles and contact information of our faculty members [Click here](#) or use this URL link <https://cmhs.uaeu.ac.ae/en/departments/iph/faculty.shtml>

ASPHER documents translated to the Arabic language

In the wake of COVID-19 pandemic public health as a discipline emerged vibrantly creating a need to highlight this discipline, its goals, objectives and functions for the scientific and the non-scientific community. For this reason, The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) created a Guide to public health terminologies, functions and main components—“How to count illness” in many languages and made it available on its website. In addition to the guide, ASPHER prepared a Statement on the use of masks by children in June 2020 in different languages to state the scientific evidence behind children’s mask protection during the COVID-19 pandemic, benefits, harms and right measures for best precautions. Under leadership of Dr. Mohamud Sheek-Hussein (Member of ASPHER COVID-19 Task Force), Dr. Iffat Elbarazi, and Dr. Mohammad El-Sadig worked collaboratively on the translation of the both documents into Arabic language.

Arabic Translation of ASPHER links

- “How to count Illness: Basic Epidemiological Concepts for Understanding the COVID-19 Epidemic”. The Arabic version of the book is published by ASPHER and released on ASPHER website on 20, 2020. [Link](#)
- “ASPHER/EAP Statement On The Use of Masks By Children”, published by the Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) and the European Academy of Paediatricians (EAP) and released on ASPHER website on June, 2020, version 2. [Link](#)

ASPHER
The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region

EAP
European Academy of Paediatrics
Pediatric Section of EAP

CATOLICA
INSTITUTO DE CIÊNCIAS DA SAÚDE
FACULDADE DE MEDICINA

ASPHER/EAP STATEMENT ON THE USE OF MASKS BY CHILDREN

بيان رابطة مدارس الصحة العامة الأوروبية (ASPHER) والرابطة الأكاديمية الأوروبية لطب الأطفال (EAP) حول طرق استخدام الأقنعة الواقية لدى الأطفال
يونيو 2020 النسخة الثانية
النسخة العربية: "Arabic version-Ar"

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رئيس الرابطة الأكاديمية لطب الأطفال EAP

جون ميثاقون-زين رابطة أطر (المؤلف الرئيسي)
بريد الإلكتروني: john.middleton@asper.org

New IPH Webinar Series

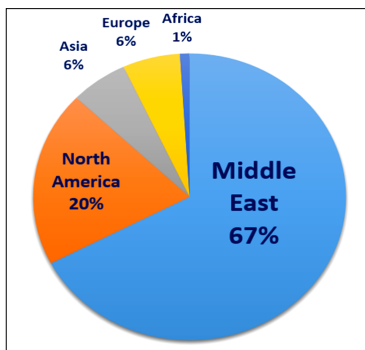
IPH is starting a tradition to organize a series of public health webinars as part of worldwide campaign “**This Is Public Health**”. The webinars will be held monthly on third Wednesday.

The inaugural Webinar, entitled “**How our instincts to be healthy are making us sick**” was held on October 21st 2020. The distinguished guest speakers were Prof. Louis Hugo Francescutti and Prof. Robert S. Barrett from Canada.

Dr. Louis Hugo Francescutti is an emergency and preventive medicine physician, a university professor, and an international speaker. He was trained in preventive medicine at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and is Past-President of the Canadian Medical Association, and Past-President of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. Dr. Francescutti has spent nearly three decades advocating one message: Live Smart.



Dr. Robert Barrett has spent much of his life studying behavior, group dynamics, and organizational culture. His primary focus is on why we do the things we do and how individuals and teams can reach top performance. He has traveled to rural Nigeria to interview recruiters and leaders of death squads on how they indoctrinate fighters, he helped build Canada's first ever Patient Safety Officer program for Canadian hospitals, lectured on intercultural negotiation for senior Canadian Forces officers deploying to Afghanistan, and was lead researcher on a unique program designed to investigate ways to mitigate astronaut crew conflict in space for future Mars missions.



The participants were attending inaugural webinar from different regions (Pie chart).

The next webinar on “**Public health in a world of “Fake News”**” by Prof. Martin McKee from London School of Hygiene & Tropic Medicine will be held on November 18th 2020 @ 7pm (UAE time).

To attend [Click here](#) (passcode: 075385).



ASPHER News

In September, ASPHER activities included the **General Assembly**, at which ten new Schools of Public Health were welcomed. Member Schools, ASPHER COVID-19 Task Force and young professionals reported achievements and accepted new Strategy to 2025. Professor Carlo Signorelli from University Vita-Salute San Raffaele, Milan, Italy was acclaimed as new President-elect from May 2021. Nadav Davidovitch (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Be'er Sheva, Israel) and Carla Lopes (ISPUP, Porto, Portugal) were also acclaimed as new ASPHER Executive Board members to serve from May 2021.



Carlo Signorelli, PhD is Full Professor of Hygiene and Public Health at the Vita -Salute San Raffaele University of Milan and Director of the School of Public Health (Igiene e Medicina Preventiva). He holds degrees in Medicine & Surgery, Law and Political Sciences, Master and PhD in Epidemiology from the University of London (LSHTM) and PhD in public health. Prof. Signorelli is author of over 1300 scientific and journalistic publications (220 of which are listed in PubMed and 40 university texts). H-index: 25. Coordinator of research projects including EU Commission H2020 on economic and social aspects of COVID -19. He has been and is a member of several commissions and working groups including the COVID-19 Technical Scientific Committee of the Lombardy Region.

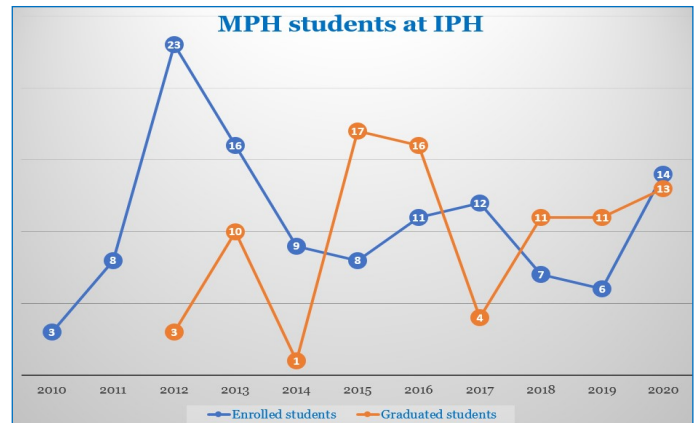
ASPHER has convened a **COVID-19 Task Force** to facilitate relevant networking necessary to respond to the pandemic emergency. The task force holds biweekly meetings and is working to identify priority areas related to the COVID-19 emergency and aftermath where ASPHER and Schools of Public Health may play a role. The ASPHER COVID-19 Task Force has produced a large body of work and recommendations, with language translations whenever possible. Dr Mohamud Sheek-Hussein is representative of IPH at Task Force.

MPH Program

The MPH program in Public Health is a professional part-time advanced degree designed for medical, health and science professionals who intend to advance and lead in their career. The flexible and interest driven program allows students to develop, analyse, and implement policy plans, and evaluate health services and programs whilst catering for their individual career goals.

The MPH is an internationally recognized qualification in public health. It provides broad academic training in public health, epidemiology, biostatistics, and healthcare management. It can lead to a career in public health practice, academic public health or epidemiology, and/or research.

Currently, there are 30 students registered in the MPH program in Public Health. The line graph shows the number of yearly enrolled and graduated MPH students.



We would like to welcome our new MPH students who joined in the Fall of 2020

Maitha Ali Mohamed Obaid Albreiki

Aseilah Ahmed Mohamed Obaid Alhefeiti

Shaikha Mohammed Alalawi

Haneen Ahmad Mohammad Al Aker

Sara Abdul Naser Ibrahim Yousef

Dima Ibrahim AL Jawarneh

Eman Mohamed Abdel Latif

Chidiebere Martins Egbulun

Maryam S. Yammahi

Salama Salem Saeed Abdulla Alkaabi

Hamdah A. Alyami

Mouza Saeed Helal Mohammed Alkuwaiti

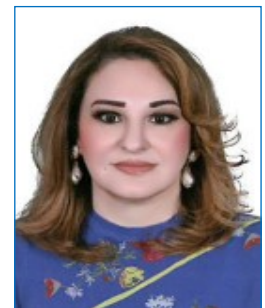
Tasneem Jaafar Mahjoub Mohamed Salih Mahjoub Mohamed Salih

Salma Abdelrahman Osman Mohamed

Message from IPH–MPH Alumni

Dr Wasan Mohammed Al Joboori

During this stage of my professional career, I sought a postgraduate course in public health from the internationally reputed UAE university to be able to further my journey in pursuing excellence and self-development. I believe that I have learned a lot at the University of UAE, due to the latest technological advances in the medical field, which in the future could be utilized to help serve my country and its people. Top tier education provided by the public health team at the University of UAE and intellectual luminaries in the faculty has enabled me to understand the finer subtleties of my field of expertise being in the department of maternal and child health. In addition, the sharing of experiences and techniques with students from an international global cosmos has aided my development academically, socially, and professionally, making me a better groomed and socially aware individual.



The field of public health has been my main passion. I found it the most challenging as it allowed me to serve my country and its society. As well as, develop health measures that have an effect on a macro scale. Simply defined, Public Health is the science of providing protection and promotion of community health through organized community efforts. As for the proper development of any country, it is imperative that the health of its citizens should be safeguarded and protected. Public health is not only the responsibility of the government but also the responsibility of individuals to ensure that a successful and cohesive program of Public health and related policies are followed for effective utilization and channelization of the provided resources of a country. The challenges the field of public health is facing today are greater than ever. With diseases assuming magnitudes of alarming properties, the fight for a healthier and safer world through prevention and awareness has become much more important. Issues of public health need to be applied at a governmental level through effective policy formulation, as well as at the level of individuals through the diligent discharge of their social and civic responsibilities. It is in this field of specialization that I wanted to further study and research to contribute back to my country in modest ways. I have chosen the UAE as my ideal destination in pursuit of higher education as the academic approach provided in the UAE institutions is a holistic mix of theory and practical application, quite similar to the education in my country (Oman).

My interest in public health and other related areas of research have stemmed from my education in college, matured with my specialized training and education and it has formed an integral part of my professional duties in the department of maternal and child health today.

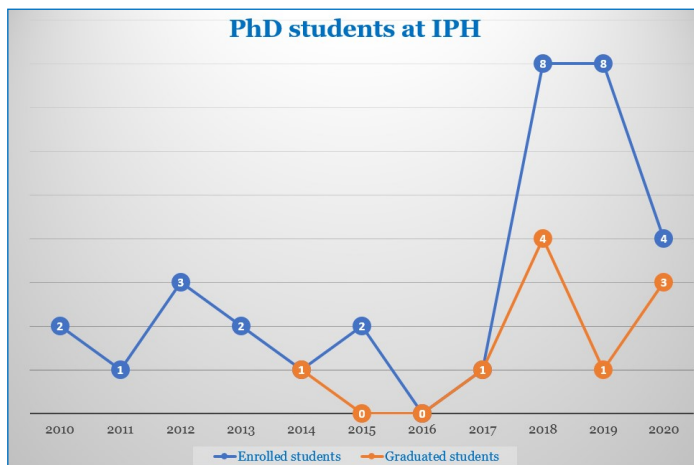
PhD Program

The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in Public Health offered by the IPH is designed to provide student with sufficient knowledge, research skills and competency in a wide variety of areas that will prepare him/her for a career in public health and epidemiology research and leadership.

The PhD program in Public Health embraces both course work as well as original research work completion. The combination of unique courses covers several public health topics, epidemiology, bio-statistics, and research methodology. This 54-credit hours PhD program is typically finished in four to six years. The program intends to contribute to the advancement of the UAE knowledge-based economy through community engagement and knowledge transfer. The program will enhance the scientific innovation through research and establish the UAEU as a leader in medical research within the country and region.

Currently, there is a total of 22 students enrolled in the PhD program in Public Health.

The line graph shows the number of yearly enrolled and graduated PhD students.



We would like to welcome our new PhD students who joined in the Fall of 2020

Faduma Adan Ismail Elmi

(Supervisor: Prof. Syed Shah)

Noorah Taresh Obaid Alkhasri Alaleeli

(Supervisor: Dr. Iffat Elbarazi)

Successful accreditation of the IPH-PhD Program in Public Health

Recently, in September 2020, The Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA) has officially accredited the PhD program in Public Health offered by the Institute of Public Health. The CAA is the UAE Federal Government Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. Working collaboratively with relevant national and local authorities in the Emirates, the CAA has a key leadership role in securing and developing the quality of higher education in the UAE.

Our PhD program welcomes local and international applicants. There are various scholarship and fellowship opportunities. So far, 10 PhD degree holders have graduated from our PhD program. PhD holders are currently holding senior positions across the UAE.

Application to the PhD program in Public Health is highly competitive. For more information, it is highly advisable to start communicating with the office of graduate students at the UAE University.

Achievements of IPH-PhD students

Harvard Introduction to Clinical Research Program

On Sep 21, 2020 IPH PhD Students “Yasin Gamal Yasin” and “Ghuwaya Humaid Alnuaimi” have graduated and from this unique program offered by the Harvard Medical School in Dubai.

The two IPH PhD students participated in this training program have found many opportunities to exchange and improve their knowledge of clinical research. This unique mix of individual and cooperative learning provided PhD students with strong critical thinking skills, while also exposed them to the challenges and opportunities of collaborative research efforts.



Scientific contribution of IPH–PhD student

Azhar Talal

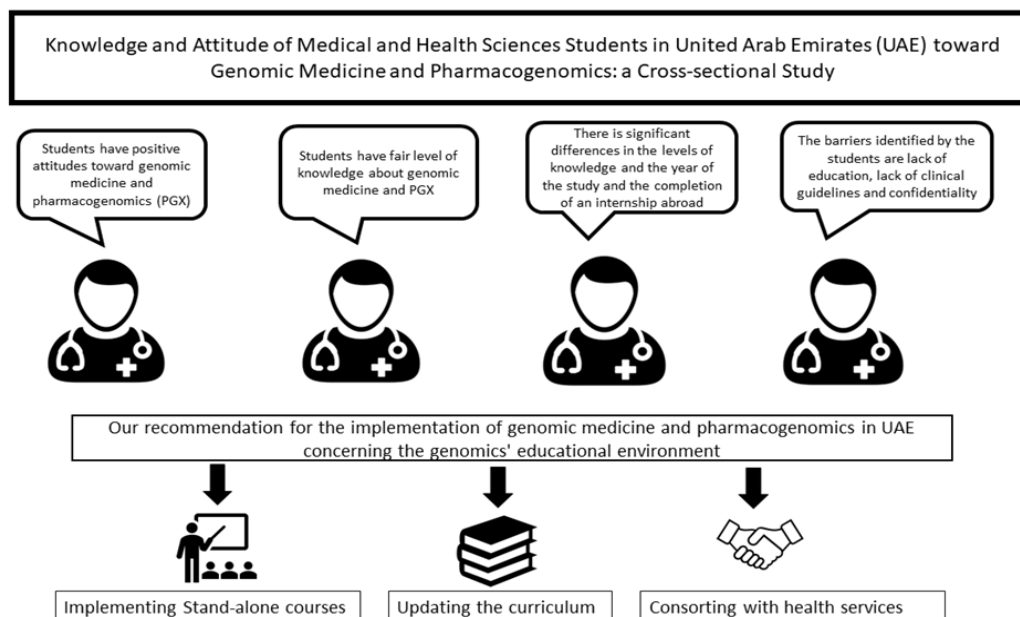


As a PhD student, you will hear this all the time, I remember in my interview for PhD I was asked about my publication and at that time I had nothing. I still remember how they looked at me. During the orientation, one of the professors mentioned a PhD student who published more than 5 papers while she was a student. At that moment I decided this is my bar, I will try my best to publish more than 5 papers. However, this is not an easy task. I remember I wrote a draft of a paper in my first semester, and the supervisors gave me their comments about ways to make the paper better, however I felt this process of writing a good paper as a brick wall. I had two options to stop there or to climb the brick wall. I wanted to make my professors proud, they believed in me and they were there for me all the time. Especially Prof. Fatima Al-Maskari, she believed in me from the first day and was there for me every step in the way. The formula for publication is reading, reading and reading. I made a notebook, every time I read a paper for journal club I will document new vocabularies related to my filed as well as common phrases used by authors. Now this notebook is my most valuable possession. I also benefited from attending online courses about scientific writing. Today I celebrate publishing two papers in a high impact journal, and want to celebrate that together.

This study is currently published online: Rahma A., Elbarazi I., Ali BR., Patrinos GP., Ahmed LA., and Al Maskari F. *Genomics and Pharmacogenomics Knowledge, Attitude and Practice of Pharmacists Working in United Arab Emirates: Findings from Focus Group Discussions—A Qualitative Study*. Journal of Personalized Medicine. 2020 Sep; 10(3): 134. Sep 2020 18.

Genomics and pharmacogenomics are relatively new fields in medicine in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Understanding the knowledge, attitudes and current practices among pharmacists is an important pillar to establish the roadmap for implementing genomic medicine and pharmacogenomics; (2) Methods: A qualitative method was used, with focus group discussions (FGDs) being conducted among pharmacists working in public and private hospitals in Abu Dhabi Emirate. Snowball sampling was used. Thematic inductive analysis was performed by two researchers independently. NVIVO software was used to establish the themes; (3) Results: Lack of knowledge of genomics and pharmacogenomics among pharmacists was one of the most prominent findings. Therefore, the role of pharmacist in making the right decisions was highlighted to be a barrier for pharmacogenomics implementation in the UAE. Pharmacists have a positive attitude toward pharmacogenomics, but they are preoccupied with concern of confidentiality. In addition, religion and culture shadowed their attitudes toward genetic testing; (4) Conclusions: It is highly recommended to introduce new courses and training workshops for healthcare providers to improve the opportunities for genomics and pharmacogenomics application in the UAE. Pharmacists agreed that the health authorities should take the lead for improving trust and confidence in the system for a better future in the era of genomics and pharmacogenomics.

This study is currently published online: Rahma A., Eksheik M., Elbarazi I., Ali B., Patrinos G., Kazim M., Alfasasi S., Ahmed L., and AlMaskari F. *Knowledge and Attitude of Medical and Health Sciences Students in United Arab Emirates toward Genomic Medicine and Pharmacogenomics: a cross-sectional study*. Journal of Personalized Medicine. Oct 2020.



Community contribution of PhD Student to “COVID-19 Response Accelerator Boot Camp”

Suad Mohamed Ajab



The "COVID-19 Response Accelerator" is an initiative jointly designed by UAEU Science and Innovation Park: Industry Liaison Program (ILP), Abu Dhabi Health Services Company (SEHA), and the Future of Work Lab. Five teams consisting of 82 innovators - each team led by up to four SEHA healthcare professionals, and included technology providers, researchers and students from UAEU - tackled five challenges relating to pandemics such as COVID-19 submitted by SEHA. The boot camp lasted for four weeks (July 23 - August 26) resulting five pilot-ready health-tech solutions.

Public Health Institute PhD student/Suad Ajab was part of team 1 developing a platform named "Tawasul" aiming to empowering pediatric Type 1 Diabetes patients and their families to better manage care. The "Tawasul" platform includes a mobile application that gamifies blood-glucose readings, to incentivize children to better manage their blood-glucose levels. The platform also shares information such as glucose readings, educational & inspirational content with the child's parents, and their healthcare providers, enables real-time

interaction with the child and parents to ensure proactive management of Type 1 Diabetes.



Congratulations to our PhD Students Dr Ali Al Rahma and Dr Maryam Bashir for successfully graduating from the UAEU PhD Students Teaching Academy



Ongoing Research Projects by IPH–PhD Students

Infertility and its associated risk factors in the UAE

Research Team: Noor Abdo (PhD student), Dr. Rami H. Al-Rifai (Principal Investigator), Dr. Luai Ahmed, Dr. Abderrahim Oulhaj, Prof. Michal Grivna.

A major health issue in the world causing not only physical distress to patients, but also psychological and financial burden that can lead to depression, discrimination, and ostracism. Infertility, the inability to conceive, is a global concern with an estimated prevalence of 10-15% worldwide. Causes of infertility are numerous, and many risk factors can be involved in infertility ranging from lifestyle factors, chronic diseases such as obesity and smoking to pathogenic infections. Fortunately, many of these factors are preventable and treatable.

What about infertility in the UAE?

In the UAE, yet, there is a noticeable dearth of evidence-based data related to infertility and its risk factors along a noticeable lack for epidemiological studies on this particular population. To fill this major gap in evidence, Dr. Rami H. Al-Rifai (Assistant Professor and Epidemiologist) the lead principal investigator, and Noor Abdo (PhD student) are carrying out a field epidemiological study on infertile populations in the UAE. The data collection phase of this research project, as a major component to fulfill the requirements of the PhD degree, has recently started.



The leading aim of this research project is to provide a high-quality evidence-based epidemiological data on infertility and its associated factors to inform clinicians, health-policy makers, researchers, and local communities in the UAE. Infertility needs to be considered in the context of health outcomes and extra social, psychological, and economic burdens. As such, it is imperative to provide evidence-based findings for future strategies and preventive interventions to improve infertility care and expand fertility awareness, as well as to save country resources.

Following the case-control study design, over 500 infertile and 500 fertile people will be recruited and studied. This study design will allow the research team to come up with a strong evidence on the different sociodemographic, lifestyle habits, and health conditions that could contribute to infertility. For the first time in the UAE, this project will provide the first-ever substantial volume of collected data and quantitatively oriented assessment of infertility in the UAE, and it will contribute positively and genuinely to the existing knowledge and to the expansion of the research establishment in the UAE.

This research project is fully funded by a generous research grant from the Zayed Bin Sultan Center for Health Sciences – UAE University.

The Roadmap for the full implementation of Genomic Medicine and Pharmacogenomics in UAE

Research Team: Azhar T. Rahma (PhD student), Prof. Fatima Al-Maskari, Dr. Luai A. Ahmed, Prof. Bassam R. Ali, Prof. George P. Patrinos, Dr. Iffat Elbarazi .

Public Health Genomics is a recent trend in the discipline of public health comprising the use of genetic epidemiology, biostatistics, health policy, health education, and state-funded programs focused on surveillance and prevention of heritable disorders as well as provide the necessary set up needed to achieve the ultimate aim of improving population health. The underlying driving force behind this discipline is the phenomenal improvement in our understanding of the human genome and its relevance to human health and disease. This understanding led to numerous medical and public health applications. In this project, we aim to assess the current status of utilizing genomic medicine and pharmacogenomics in the UAE and to construct a roadmap to implementing genomic medicine in the clinic with the aim of improving the public health of the UAE. In particular, the major specific objectives of this project are to:



1. Assess the Genomic Medicine and Pharmacogenomics educational environment in the UAE.
2. Assess the level of Genomic Medicine and Pharmacogenomics knowledge and education of healthcare professionals.
3. Assess the stance of the stakeholders.
4. Map and assess the current state of genetics and genomic testing services and regulatory aspects and other relevant provisions in the UAE.

To achieve these goals, we are employing mixed method approaches using structured surveys, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a rapidly developing cosmopolitan country consisting of admixture of multinational populations with varying educational backgrounds, religious beliefs, and cultural practices. Although, it has not been accurately measured, it is believed that the health burden imposed by genetic and genomic variations on the UAE national population is very high. For example, according to the 2006 March of Dimes report, the UAE is ranked sixth out of 193 countries in terms of prevalence of birth defects, mainly caused by genetic disorders [Christianson et al., 2006]. In addition, at least 400 genetic diseases have been reported among the UAE national population with over 250 of these disorders are caused by mutations in single genes [Al-Gazali and Ali, 2010; B. Ali]. Despite these facts, the steps of adoption of Genomic medicine is shy and in its infancy phase, so our project aims at establishing the Roadmap for Genomic Medicine and Pharmacogenomics in the UAE. We plan to address the public health aspects of the roadmap.

Message from IPH-PhD Alumni

Dr Layla Mohamed Al Marzooqi

I have graduated from the Institute of Public Health, College of Medicine, and Health Sciences, UAEU in 2018. I did my degree in public health with special interest in cardiovascular disease risk factors (focusing on obesity and diabetes) in the UAE.

During my PhD course I was working as a Director of Health Regulation Department and Medical Tourism in Dubai Health Authority in addition to my clinical practice as a specialist in cardiology. I'm a graduate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland and finished general internal medical professional certificate from the same college. Also, I hold two masters, one in cardiovascular rehabilitation from Chester University -UK and an executive master in healthcare administration from Zayed University -UAE.

Currently, I am doing a postgraduate course in preventive cardiology from South Wales University and working as a full time specialist aeromedical examiner – The General Civil Aviation Authority and specialist in cardiology with special interest in preventive cardiology and cardiovascular disease in women. In addition to being an Associate Professor in Sharjah University -UAE and an Instructor in Dubai Medical College-UAE.

I encourage every Emirati to continue his/her education and to get PhD degree in their interest area in order to add to the wealth and knowledge of our country, the UAE.



International Health Awareness Days

During the past couple of months, the world has celebrated several health days to raise people's awareness on several important public health topics. To join this international efforts, the IPH is delighted to highlight these awareness days.

Breast Feeding Month

By **Dr Iffat Elbarazi** (Assistant Professor – IPH)

August is world breastfeeding awareness month. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), exclusively breastfeeding during the first 6 months is essential to provide the necessary nutrition for infants. The AAP recommends that mothers breastfeed exclusively for the first 6 months. Breastfeeding throughout this stage is proven to strengthen the baby's immune system, reduces diseases and allergies risk, promotes normal development and growth, regulates weight and metabolism and protect against and protect brain's health. Breast feeding is also beneficial to the mothers. It promotes faster weight loss after birth, stimulates the uterus to contract and return to normal size, reduces postpartum bleeding and promotes bonding between baby and mother. The Institute of Public Health recommends exclusive breastfeeding.



World Patient Safety Day

By **Dr Iffat Elbarazi** (Assistant Professor – IPH)

Yearly, **September 17th** is World Patient Safety Day. In 2019, WHO announced 17th of September as World Patient Safety Day in a bid to increase public engagement in the safety of health care and promote global actions to enhance patient safety and to reduce harm". (WHO, 2020)



This year the objectives of the world patient safety day included raising global awareness about the importance of health care workers safety linking it to patients' safety, to engage multiple stakeholders and adopt multimodal strategies to improve the safety of health workers and patients, to Implement urgent and sustainable actions to invest in the safety of health workers, as a priority for patient safety and to provide due recognition of health workers' dedication and hard work, particularly amid the current fight against COVID-19. The IPH strongly recommends policies that protect health care workers safety and patients safety.

World Heart Day – 2020 theme “Use Heart to beat cardiovascular disease”

By **Dr Iffat Elbarazi** (Assistant Professor – IPH)

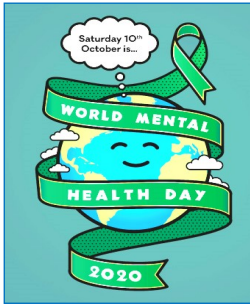
On the 29th of September, the world celebrated “World Heart Day with the theme #UseHeart to beat cardiovascular disease”.

The COVID-19 pandemic pointed the light to the importance of heart and cardiovascular health. According to the World Heart Federation, cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the number one cause of death around the globe due to various causes including from smoking, diabetes, high blood pressure obesity, air pollution and other conditions. The World Heart Federation endorses the message “that in the time of COVID -19, taking care of your heart is more important than ever before.” The IPH joins forces to recommend that health care workers, stakeholders and the global community to fight with heart to beat CVD.

USE ♥ TO BEAT ♡

World Mental Health Day

By Dr Emanuel Stip (Professor – Psychiatry)



It is celebrated yearly on **October 10th** in support of mental health, to raise awareness about mental health disorders, prevention, and treatment. The WHO stresses the importance of investing in mental health programs at the national and international levels, as this year's World Mental Health Day comes at a time when our daily lives have changed considerably because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic have brought many challenges for health-care workers and for the whole community especially with its devastating economic and financial burden. The burden of mental problems and issues is not known in the UAE. Efforts are needed to identify this burden and its past, present and future impact. The IPH strongly recommend more research in this area and stresses mental health can be treated if properly diagnosed and managed.

Breast cancer awareness month

By Dr Iffat Elbarazi (Assistant Professor – IPH)

October is breast Cancer Awareness Month. It is an opportunity to focus on breast cancer prevention, early detection and its impact on those affected by the disease and their families. According to the Globocan 2018 statistics, breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer among females and the second leading cause to mortality among cancer patients in the UAE (IARC, 2018). Cancer is a top priority in the UAE being the third leading to death. Raising awareness about early detection, genetic testing and screening are essential to limit its impact on families and communities. The IPH join forces in encouraging all women to get screened for breast cancer. In the UAE, yearly mammograms for women above 40 and breast self-examination are the recommended measures for early detection and early prevention.



The International Day For the Older Persons

By Dr Javaid Nauman (Assistant Professor – IPH)

Yearly, **1st of October** is The International Day for Older Persons. It is a United Nations designated day to focus on the well-being of the elderly people. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), we are at the "Decade of Healthy Ageing". An issued statement by UN Secretary-General António Guterres addresses this



important day and stresses the importance of stronger action in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic to protect the older people. He says "The world marks the 30th anniversary of the International Day of Older Persons as we reckon with

the disproportionate and severe impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has wrought on older persons around the world – not only on their health, but on their rights and well-being".

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Volume 1, Issue 3

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