



Partnering with Ethiopians to build health care capacity in Ethiopia

As with any business, university or nation, retaining the best and brightest people is key to growth and prosperity. In order for life in Ethiopia to change, Ethiopia must find a way to retain its professionals and scholars.

Background:

The University of Toronto (UofT) and Addis Ababa University (AAU) have initiated an educational collaboration (Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration – TAAAC) to assist the Ethiopian faculty enhance existing residency training programs, develop subspecialty residency training programs and selected PhD programs and start residency programs identified as necessary by AAU. To enable this, selected UofT teaching faculty will volunteer to travel to Addis for one month teaching blocks to undertake this sequentially organized academic partnership.



Ethiopia Today:

Ethiopia has emerged after its first shaky 10 years of democracy with the worst statistics in sub Saharan Africa for population health, access to primary health care, clean water, literacy and has the highest “brain drain” of doctors in Africa. However, Ethiopia also has a secure cultural identity and the strong desire to stem the downward spiral of this remarkable country into increasing poverty, starvation and further reliance on external support.

The Ethiopian Government has recently undertaken the goal of significantly increasing the numbers of children enrolled in elementary schools, moving from a literacy rate of 20-30% to 80-100% in some areas. Sure that the route to food security and successful development lies in the need to increase the number of educated professionals, they are increasing the number of Universities from 6 to 21, and have an ambitious plan to increase

PhD graduates to 5000 in the next 10 years – a huge increase from the 66 PhDs who graduated from Addis Ababa University (AAU) in the last 30 years. At present they have perhaps 300 PhD holders in the country.

The Toronto Addis Ababa Psychiatry Program (TAAPP)

In 2003 three psychiatrists on faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at AAU opened the first psychiatry residency training program in Ethiopia. They asked the UofT Dept. of Psychiatry to assist by providing external teaching faculty to help train their residents in country. Since that time TAAPP has worked with local Addis psychiatry faculty to teach and provide support to help nurture and sustain the post graduate psychiatry program. In 5 years the number of psychiatrists in the country has risen from 9 to 34, and the psychiatry faculty has more than doubled from 3 to 8. At this time all TAAPP graduates are still working in Ethiopia.



Leadership: Addis Ababa University



Atalay Alem MD PhD, Psychiatrist, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, Reform Officer AAU: One of the three founders and coordinator of the first psychiatry residency program in Ethiopia and of TAAPP. Atalay will continue to plan, coordinate and oversee activities related to the residency and subspecialty program development with TAAAC, including the expansion of the research component of the curricula and development of the teaching components for residents across specializations.



Miliard Derbew MD, FRSC, Paediatric Surgeon, Dean of Faculty of Medicine: Miliard is one of two paediatric surgeons in Ethiopia and following a Fellowship year at the Wilson Centre returned to Ethiopia to become Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, AAU. In this position he has oversight of TAAAC for the Faculty of Medicine and AAU, facilitating the organization of the partnership both systemically and for the relevant health professionals involved.

Leadership: University of Toronto



Clare Pain MD was a physiotherapist when she first went to Ethiopia as a VSO volunteer. Her commitment to that country and its people has never waned since then. She is now a Psychiatrist and the coordinator of TAAAC, an initiative dedicated to building health care capacity in Ethiopia. Clare and Atalay and Dr Mesfin Araya started the process in 2003 with the Toronto Addis Ababa Psychiatry Project (TAAPP) - a collaboration between the Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, University of Toronto and the under-resourced Department of Psychiatry, Faculty of Medicine, at Addis Ababa University. Having developed a successful method of collaboration to build and teach a residency program, she and Atalay resolved to expand the engagement between the two institutions to facilitate teaching and capacity building in other residency programs, specifically to develop subspecialty residency programs and health related PhD training. A delegation of Senior administrators from Addis Ababa University, visiting Toronto in 2008 laid the groundwork for TAAAC.



Brian Hodges MD PhD, went to Ethiopia to teach the first group of residents in psychiatry at AAU in 2003, at about the same time he became Director of the Wilson Centre for Research in Education, which houses the TAAAC. Brian is a physician, a psychiatrist, an academic, an administrator, an educator and researcher, specializing in evaluation in the health professions. He has steadfastly and in many practical ways facilitated the development first of the psychiatry project with Ethiopia and now TAAAC.



Sarita Verma MD, is the Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, a physician, researcher, administrator and lawyer, she brings a wide range of skills and far sighted vision to this project. Sarita lived and worked in Ethiopia in the 1980's during some of the worst years of the famine and she retains a strong commitment to marshalling University resources for capacity building – especially in health. She champions this project and engagement from the Deputy Dean's Office and in her capacity as head of Post Graduate Medical Education in the Faculty of Medicine.

Participating Programs:

Using the model developed by TAAPP, the following programs have begun collaboration adapting the TAAPP model to best suit their individual programs so they too can replicate the outstanding success of the Psychiatry program.

Emergency Medicine
Engineering
Family and Community Medicine
Gynecology/Obstetrics
Internal Medicine

Laboratory Medicine
Library Science
Nursing
Orthopaedics

Paediatrics
Pharmacy
Rehabilitation Medicine/Physiatry
Surgery