

Second Annual Report

July 2012 – August 2013



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the ongoing efforts, services and contributions of King Abdullah Bin Aziz Al Saud, His Excellency Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah, the staff of the Ministry of Health (MOH) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission (SACM), and the King Abdullah Fellows (KAF) for making this fellowship program successful.

We would like to offer our special thanks for the support provided by:

Dr. Ziad A. Memish

Dr. Mohammed Zamakhshary

Dr. Samar Alsagaf

Dr. Abdullah Assiri

Dr. James Curran

Dr. Carlos Del Rio

Background

In recent years, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has made significant efforts to strengthen its healthcare infrastructure. The Kingdom faces issues related to both infectious diseases (e.g., dengue, tuberculosis, hepatitis) and chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, obesity). Public health professionals play a critical role in combating these diseases.

King Abdullah established an endowment to build human capacity in KSA, and in 2010, Dr. Abdullah Al Rabeeah, the Minister of Health, signed a Letter of Engagement (LOE) with Dr. James Curran, dean of the Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH). The LOE includes several areas of mutually beneficial scientific collaboration.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the King Abdullah Fellowship Program are to:

- Strengthen public health capacity in KSA
- Engage in collaborative research activities
- Promote bilateral exchange of students and researchers

Master of Public Health Education (2011 - Present)

King Abdullah Fellows matriculate in the Hubert Department of Global Health (HDGH) and the department of Health Policy and Management (HPM). Fellows conduct their practicum assignments and thesis research in KSA. The first cohort of six students graduated in May 2013. The second and third cohorts are currently enrolled and number 26 students altogether.

Collaborative Research

KA Fellows engage in collaborative research as a part of their program and graduate from Rollins having produced publishable work on public health topics such as diabetes, tobacco, hepatitis, vaccine preventable diseases, and tuberculosis in KSA. RSPH faculty to develop collaborative research or spend extended lengths of time in KSA performing program assessments.

Exchange of Students

In 2009, the first American Emory MPH student spent her summer in Riyadh working on a tuberculosis research project. Her manuscript was published in the *Annals of Epidemiology*. In May 2011, four American Emory MPH candidates traveled to Riyadh on a Global Field Experience (GFE) to work on diabetes and smoking control, anti-microbial resistance, and hepatitis projects, in collaboration with Saudi counterparts.

2012 - 2013 Timeline

October – November 2012: Cohort of 80 candidates recruited and interviewed from MoH

January 2013: English course and preparation in Riyadh

March 2013: Cohort of 30 accepted into the HDGH and HPM

April 2013: Cohort of 8 enrolled in HDGH and 8 enrolled in HPM

May 2013 – August 2013: Cohort of 2012 traveled to KSA to complete practicums

March – August 2013: Administrative and logistical support for arrival of Cohort of 2013

July – August 2013: Cohort of 16 students arrived to Atlanta

August 2013: Cohort began studies

September 2013: International Fellows Welcome Reception hosted by Dr. Carlos Del Rio

August – December 2013: English, Epidemiology, Accounting and Biostatistics tutoring provided



First King Abdullah Fellowship cohort's graduation in May 2013
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvWpYAibp9o>)

Dr. Fatima Al Slail's commencement address: In May 2013, Dr. Al Slail was nominated and then elected by peers and faculty members to give the commencement address at graduation before fellow students, faculty and staff, and family members and friends.
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oclsvBfPwnE>)

Dr. Abdulaziz Aloufi (Global Health, Cohort 2012) published an editorial entitled "A Call for Universal Healthcare" in the March 28, 2013 edition of the Emory Wheel, the campus-wide newspaper.
(<http://www.emorywheel.com/a-call-for-universal-healthcare/>)

The Saudi Student Association (SSA) was founded by KA Fellows in September 2013.

The first International Week celebrating Saudi Arabia took place in September with a high level of participation and enthusiasm among the Rollins staff and student body.

Program Staff



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Programmatic Support

Dr. McNabb serves as the academic advisor for the Fellows. From the time they arrive, the Fellows and their families receive social and academic support to adjust to life at Emory.

- Weekly meetings with Dr. McNabb to discuss academic and social issues
- Meetings with faculty, KAF staff, and instructors
- English language instruction and support
- Biostatistics, epidemiology, accounting and data analysis instruction and support
- Transportation services during transition period
- Assistance with enrolling children in schools and daycares
- Navigating American Culture workshop for incoming and current students
- Administrative support for filing the necessary paperwork
- English classes for spouses and family members of Fellows and
- Financial support for extracurricular activities inside and outside of Georgia

English as a Second Language for Families

Classes have been developed for the KAFP cohorts' families, which are meant to aid in the smooth transition into American culture through the offering of beginning level "survival" English classes. Classes include mainly conversation practice on topics that will allow for everyday conversation in the United States. This includes focus on vocabulary and grammar points that are needed to construct proper English sentences in real world scenarios.

CONCLUSION

The King Abdullah Fellowship Program continues to be successful due to the efforts of the Fellows and staff, as well as the commitment and ongoing support of the MOH, SACM, and Emory University. Through this partnership, the program has grown, and Fellows are continuing the pursuit of a rigorous education in public health. Exposure to Emory's extensive knowledge base and the exchange of experiences will lead to the development of skills that will allow these students to make significant contributions to the advancement of public health. The continuation of the program will allow stronger relationships to grow between public health experts in KSA and the United States.



Photo: Atlanta, Georgia, USA Skyline at Dusk by Fatima Al Slail, Cohort of 2011

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Admissions

1. Lesson Learned: The candidates applied through the MOH without preparing for or taking the GRE and TOEFL tests, which are required application documents and therefore were less prepared.

Recommendation: The recruitment process and interviews in the MoH should begin in September. Once screened, KAF staff can refer candidates to the KAF Potential Applicant Form which will facilitate the admissions process. This will also better prepare students for KAF admissions orientation held in KSA during January (e.g., work on editing resumes, statement of purpose, preparing for the GRE) and finalizing applications. The fellows must submit their applications by March 1 (latest deadline for applications).

2. Lesson Learned: The candidates need to have strong English language skills (minimum 85 TOEFL score) in order to succeed in their academic work and daily life in the United States.

Recommendation: During orientation, accepted applicants will take the same English placement test that all of the international students currently take. If they are not at a high enough level of proficiency, they will be required to take mandatory ESL classes for their first two semesters.

3. Lesson Learned: Delays processing paperwork from the MoH and Ministry of Civil Service (MOCS) and the U.S. Embassy resulted in late student arrivals in the United States.

Recommendation: Better coordination between MoH and MOCS and between the KAF Program and US Embassy in Riyadh. Clearly defined start dates and deadlines. Starting the admissions process in September will allow them to gain more time and possibly avoid arriving late.

4. Lesson Learned: Applicants do not respond in a timely manner (e.g., Skype, e-mail) causing delays in the application process and arrival to Emory before classes begin.

Recommendation: Clearly defined deadlines and cut-off dates. No exceptions should be made for any deadlines or cut-off dates. If applicants do not respond in a timely manner to requests from Emory RSPH Admissions and KAF Team, they will not be considered for admissions. Interested applicants should complete a KAF Potential Applicant Interest form to facilitate the process of KAF staff assisting interested parties in the admissions process.

5. Lesson Learned: Miscommunication and misunderstanding of KAF Program Services.

Recommendation: Develop and review KAF Agreement form and/or promotional materials. This must also be presented to applicants in January.

Logistics

1. Lesson Learned: Obliging fellows for their numerous individual transportation requests.

Recommendation: The KAF team should set one week for all the fellows for transportation that includes shopping-related activities (to help settle in to Atlanta). A bus should be hired and different schedules should be developed. The fellows will have the choice of visiting different places, only within the offered schedules. Exceptions will be for any anyone who facing visa issue delays or a delay in the release of their papers from the MOCS only.

2. Lesson Learned: Communication and scheduling of logistics increase and challenge the program as size of student body increases.

Recommendation: Adopt a more centralized student data and program management system that is specific to KAF.

English Language

1. Lesson Learned: Incoming Fellows need fluency in English in order to thrive and function successfully in the Emory campus and Atlanta community.

Recommendation: Once candidates have been accepted into KAF, they should take the same English assessment that other international students take during orientation. If their English needs improvement, they must enroll in a mandatory ESL class that lasts two semesters and appears on their final transcript.

Master of Public Health Thesis List: Cohort of 2011 – 2013



Hisham Bashawari, M.B.B.S., MPH
Sleepless in Makkah City, Saudi Arabia: Prevalence and
Risk of Insomnia and the Variations in Sleep Quality
Among Visitors of Primary Care Centers

Fatima Younis Al Slail, M.D., MPH
A Descriptive study of Cardiovascular Risk Profiles of
Adults with Type 2 Diabetes from Hospitals in Urban
Saudi Arabia Over a Five Year Period (2008-2012)



Mohammad Jamal Al Khalawi, M.B.B.S., MPH
Evaluation of Tuberculosis Public Health Surveillance,
Al-Madinah Province, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2012

Osama Alwafi, M.B.B.S., MPH
Dengue Fever in Makkah,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2008-2012



Fawaz Saror Al Rasheedi, M.B.B.S., MPH
Measles Trends in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
2002-2012



Saud Alzahrani, M.B.B.S., MPH
Analyses of Foodborne Disease Outbreaks during
Hajj, Makkah, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia,
2009 – 2011

