



EMORY
ROLLINS
SCHOOL OF
PUBLIC
HEALTH



King Abdullah Fellowship Program



Fifth Annual Report

July 2015 — August 2016

Hubert Department of Global Health

Rollins School of Public Health

Emory University

Atlanta, Georgia, USA

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

Dr. Abdullah Assiri
Dr. Samar Alsaggaf
Dr. Adel Bashatah
Dr. Farid Awanas
Dr. Abdulaziz Bin Saeed
Amb. Joseph Westphal
Dr. James Curran
Dr. Carlos Del Rio



Executive Summary

Since the first cohort's graduation in 2013, when a fellow was chosen by faculty and students to be the commencement speaker, the King Abdullah Fellowship Program (KAFP) has seen its students distinguish themselves, doing important work in research and in the field of public health in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The past year is no exception.

During the last school year, KA fellows have led the Saudi Students Association (SSA) which became an officially chartered Emory association in conjunction with the [Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission](#). Through the SSA, students have taken an active role in the life of the school. For example, they organized the school-wide celebration of Saudi National Day. For this commemoration and cultural showcase, the main entrances, lobby, and primary walkway between the two school buildings were decorated with art, furnishings, and images from KSA. Hundreds of students, faculty, and staff enjoyed Saudi cuisine prepared by the students and attended cultural events that were scheduled that day.

During the 2015—2016 school year, a total of 27 first- and second-year students were enrolled. Of the 27, 25 studied in the Global Health department and 2 in Health Policy and Management. Fourteen students in Global Health completed their degree and submitted thesis projects in different areas of public health highly relevant to KSA.

As a program, we continued to provide English instructors to the fellows, with the ratio of fellows to instructors being about 11 to 1, so everyone could easily take advantage of the support. We maintained our other services, such as English for KA families, which continued to be utilized in substantial numbers. Along with English support, we provided biostatistics support in the form of personal and group tutoring for fellows. Our team also included KAFP In-Country Directors who played a crucial role in program coordination and recruitment.

This was the first year to execute a [KAFP Online Orientation](#) which familiarized students with the basics of the curriculum, this program, and life in Atlanta. The online orientation guided candidates step-by-step through the application process with help at every stage, including resume and personal statement composition and editing. The staff made a preliminary assessment of their English language ability and level of commitment to pursuing the program as well as answered any questions that arose through the process.

This year, we welcome the sixth cohort of KAFP fellows. Their predecessors have taken leadership roles in the public health field, published their research and have gone on to continue in post-graduate studies and training. We have no doubt that these students will follow in their footsteps. We continue to be excited by the opportunities this program affords for scientific collaboration, cultural exchange, and knowledge building among public health professionals in both KSA and the United States.

Background

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has made significant efforts to strengthen the healthcare infrastructure. The Kingdom faces public health concerns for infectious diseases (e.g., MERS-CoV, dengue, tuberculosis, hepatitis) and chronic diseases (e.g., diabetes, hypertension, obesity). Public health professionals play a critical role in combatting these diseases.

The KAFP was established in 2010 as a joint effort of the KSA, MoH and RSPH at Emory University. The program was established to further strengthen the public health workforce in KSA, by graduating candidates from the Saudi health workforce with a MPH degree from RSPH.

Objectives

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

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

Master of Public Health Education (2011 to 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.

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 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. And 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, antimicrobial resistance, and hepatitis projects, in collaboration with KSA counterparts. In 2014, Global Health student Angela Guo did her practicum under the supervision of KAFP alumnae Fatima Al Slail helping in the diabetes prevention area.

Highlights

Previous Highlights

- 2010: Letter of Engagement to establish KAFP signed with Ministry of Health.
- May 2013: First King Abdullah Fellowship cohort's [graduation in May 2013](#)
- May 2013: Dr. Fatima 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
- Sep 2013: The Saudi Student Association (SSA) founded by KA Fellows
- May 2014: Abdulaziz Aloufi (Global Health, Cohort 2012) receives Award for Exceptional Global Master's Thesis poster
- May 2015: Alumni Sulafa AlQutub (Health Policy Management, Cohort 2012) and Hisham AlBashawri (Global Health, Cohort 2011) presented at the 3rd Saudi Health Exhibition and Congress in Riyadh, KSA



2015-16 Highlights

- Dec—Mar: Online Orientation for KAFP candidates
- May 2015: Cohort of 2015 traveled to KSA to complete practicums
- May 2016: First Annual KAFP Alumni Reunion
- May 2016: Saudi Student Association becomes officially chartered
- May 2016: Global Health students complete research and writing of thesis projects
- May 2016: 16 KAFP Fellows graduated



Alumni Promotions and Publications

Alumni Promotions

Sulafa AlQutub: Director of Planning in the Jeddah Health Directorate, MoH

Fatima AlSlail: Director of the National Diabetes Prevention and Control Program, MoH

Rania Alqudaihi: Head of Health Policy Department in the General Directorate of Health Affairs, Eastern Province

Saud Alzahrani: Chairman of Communicable Diseases and Vector Control Administration, Public Health Administration, Makkah Health Directorate

Homoud Algarni: Director of Surveillance at point of entry and supervisor of MERS CoV surveillance team

Abdullah Alshahrani: Head of Preventive Medicine at Asir Health Affairs

Maryam Almoklif: Assistant Director of the Quality Assurance and Patient Safety Department in the Alhassa Health Directorate

Yasser Bakhsh: General Physician, Health Surveillance Center at Jeddah Islamic Seaport

KAFP Publications

[A special commentary discussing the KAFP](#) published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*

Fatima AlSlail published [Cardiovascular Risk Profiles of Adults with Type-2 diabetes treated at Urban Hospitals in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia](#)

Homoud Algarni published [Health Conditions for Travellers to Saudi Arabia for the Pilgrimage to Mecca \(Hajj\)—2015](#)

Abdulaziz Aloufi published [Trends of Reported Human Cases of Brucellosis, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2004—2012](#)

Rania Alhelali published [Evaluation of Home Respiratory Therapy Delivered to Patients in the MoH's Home Medical Program \(HMP\) and administered through the Madinah HMP Center, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2013](#)

Mohammed AlKhalawi published [Evaluation of Tuberculosis Public Health Surveillance, Al-Madinah Province, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2012](#) in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*

Program Staff



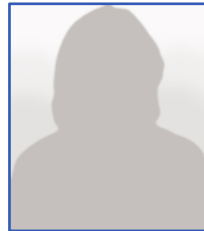
Dr. Scott JN McNabb, PhD, MS
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Research Professor, Hubert
Department of Global Health



Dr. Ghada Farhat, PhD, MPH
Co-director
Associate Professor, Hubert
Department of Global Health



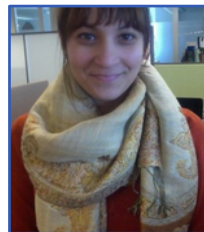
Dr. Abdullah M. Assiri, MD, FACP
Assistant Deputy Minister,
Preventive Health
Adjunct Associate Professor,
Hubert Department of Global



Lea Matar, MPHc, BSc
Program Coordinator



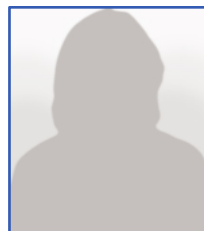
Natalie Schulhofer, BS
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Sorie Dumbuya, MPHc, BSc
ESL Instructor and
Program Associate



Prabhjyot Saini, MPH
Data-analysis tutor



Hisham Bashawri, MBBS, MPH
In-country Director



Sulafa Alqutub, MBBS, MPH
In-country Director



Fatima Younis Al Slail, MBBS, MPH
In-country Director



Nada Abdulhadi Abdullah
Coordinator for
Foreign Scholarship
Program at Emory
University

Programmatic Support

Dr. McNabb serves as the program director and 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
- Cultural adaptation workshops by Soumaya Khalifa
- Meetings with faculty, KAF staff, and instructors
- English language instruction and support for students and their families
- Biostatistics, epidemiology, accounting, and data analysis instruction and support
- Transportation services during transition period
- Assistance with enrolling children in schools and daycares
- Cultural competency workshop for incoming and current students
- Administrative support for filing the necessary paperwork
- Financial support for extracurricular activities

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.

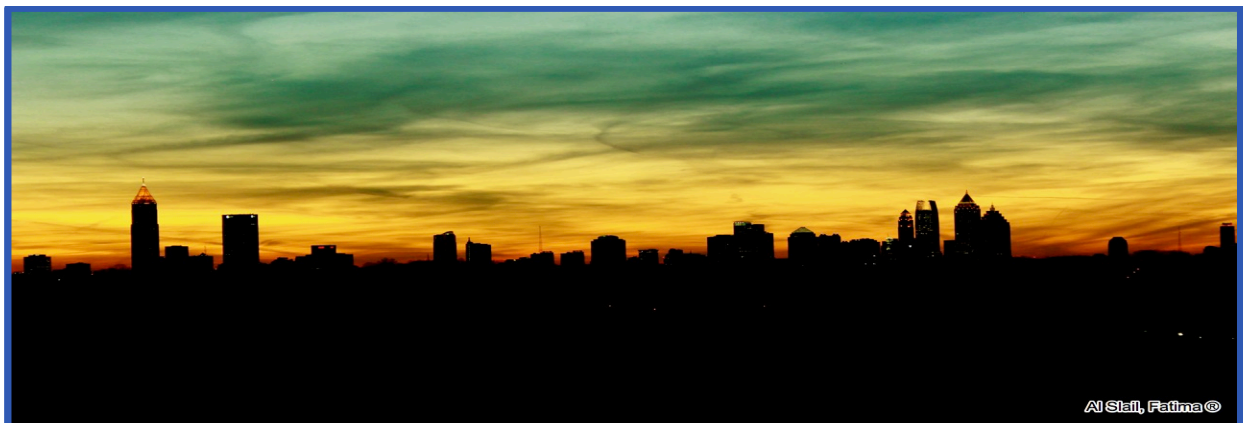


Photo: Atlanta, Georgia, USA Skyline at Dusk by Fatima Al Slail, Cohort of 2011

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

Admissions

1. **Lesson Learned:** The applicant online orientation presented some limitations including time difference, lack of proper technological training, an abundance of information over a two-week period, and lack of follow-up
Recommendation: The online orientation must begin with training to learn how to use the resources provided for orientation, and must begin no later than November (a few months after the SOPHAS applications begin to open)
2. **Lesson Learned:** The new SOPHAS system resulted applications being delayed. The candidates GRE and TOEFL tests were not received into SOPHAS in a timely manner.
Recommendation: Candidates should be required to take the GRE and TOEFL tests before the January online orientation so as to ensure a timely submission into SOPHAS and avoid technical errors caused by the system.
3. **Lesson Learned:** The candidates need to have strong English language skills, both oral and written, in order to succeed in Emory's demanding academic environment.
Recommendation: Students should plan to arrive in Atlanta by the beginning of June so as to take an intensive ESL class before the start of the academic semester. Or, they should be required to complete basic English online courses prior to their arrival.
4. **Lesson Learned:** A communication gap exists between the ministries of KSA. This resulted in the delay of the release of papers and the students' arrival in the US.
Recommendation: Clearly defined start dates and deadlines. Starting the admissions process in September will allow them to gain more time and possibly avoid arriving late.
5. **Lesson Learned:** The number of candidates available for initial screening by the MoH was less than in previous years.
Recommendation: When RSPH graduates return to Saudi Arabia, many do not receive recognition or job promotion in the MoH for their degree. Therefore, effort needs to be made to establish recognition and promote job promotion upon completing Emory's MPH.
6. **Lesson Learned:** Students entering into RSPH with existing health conditions tend to struggle initially during their time at RSPH.
Recommendation: Provide KAFP students entering into RSPH with a form that allows them the option of providing details regarding any existing medical conditions so as to

allow the KAFP team and RSPH to provide them access to proper counseling and support.

Logistics

1. **Lessons Learned:** Marketing strategies did not yield large number of applicants

Recommendation: Improved marketing and recruitment strategies to begin in the Fall of 2016 for increased applicant pool

Global Health Cohort of 2014



Yahya AlAsseri
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

Dammam University

Work Experience: Resident doctor in Public Health Department

Thesis: Trends of H1N1 cases in the Tabouk region (Saudi Arabia) from 2009—2015



Mohrah AlAlwi
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

King Abulaziz University, Jeddah

Work Experience: Infectious disease surveillance and Preventive Medicine Coordinator of National Measles Elimination Program, Taif Region

Thesis: Trends of rubella incidence during a 5-year period of case based surveillance in Saudi Arabia



Nafi AlRaihan
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, King Saudi Abulaziz University, Riyadh

Work Experience: Emergency physician, Resident in Infection Control Department MoH

Thesis: A comparison of fixed vs. mobile smoking cessation programs



Khalid Alanazi
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery
Jordan University of Science and Technology

Work Experience: Infection Control Specialist, MoH

Thesis: The prevalence of needle stick injuries among healthcare workers in Ministry of Health hospitals in Saudi Arabia between 2012—2015



Ali AlGhamdi
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, King Faisal University, Dammam

Work Experience: Infection Control Specialist in Public Health Department

Thesis: Prevalence of leishmaniasis in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia from 2011—2014



Eman AlSaeed
MBBS. MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

Work Experience: General physician in primary health care center, Manager of Health Care Center

Thesis: Incidence of hemoglobinopathy disorders, specifically, SCD, Thalassemia, after implementation of routine premarital testing in Saudi Arabia, 2010—2014



Abdullallah Alazeri
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

Work Experience: Director of Infection Control and Prevention, Makkah

Thesis: Prevalence of ventilator-associated pneumonia in intensive care units and the frequency and patterns of antimicrobial resistance of microorganisms causing VAP, Makkah, Saudi Arabia, 2012–2013



Yasser Bakhsh
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah

Work Experience: Deputy Manager, Passenger Terminal Dispensary, Health Surveillance Center at Jeddah Islamic Port

Thesis: Differences of MERS CoV mortality rates between hospitals in Saudi Arabia



Shada Baoum
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

Work Experience: Family Physician Specialist

Thesis: Obesity and physical activity among postpartum women in Jeddah



Mashaer Fallatah
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

Work Experience: Family Physician

Thesis: Assessment of the awareness of eye complications among diabetic patients attending outpatient clinics in Jeddah Eye Hospital in Jeddah City, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, 2015



Eiman Gaid
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah

Work Experience: Deputy of Infection Control Department

Thesis: Device Associated Nosocomial Infection rates and implementation of bundles in intensive care units of general hospitals, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia



Zahra Gaw
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, University of Dammam

Work Experience: General physician in primary health care, MoH

Thesis: The trend of reported cases of Alkhumra hemorrhagic fever in KSA, 2011 – 2014



AbdulHameed Kashkary
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, Taibah University

Work Experience: General physician at the MoH's Agency for Public Health, Riyadh. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) surveillance team

Thesis: Predictors of mortality among confirmed Symptomatic MERS cases in KSA, 2012–2015



Razan Thabit
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery

Work Experience: Resident

Thesis: Assessment of hypertension related knowledge, attitudes and life-style practices among hypertensive patients at primary health care centers in Jeddah, KSA

Health Policy and Management Cohort of 2014



Husain AlZobaidi
MBBS, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, King Abdul Aziz University

Work Experience: Consultant family physician, MoH, Jeddah. Trainer in Saudi Board of Family Medicine. Former Director of PHC Centers and Sectors, Jeddah

Practicum: An economic evaluation of two training programs in public health in Saudi Arabia



Nasser AlZayedi
BSN, MPH

Education: Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Dammam University

Work Experience: Nursing quality coordinator

Practicum: Improving patient safety in MoH Hospitals in Jeddah Region