

GLOBAL IS ALSO LOCAL

“Global health concerns us all,” said Suzanne Fortier, BSc’72, PhD’76, McGill’s Principal and Vice-Chancellor, opening the first Global is Local conference, held at the McGill University Faculty Club in May 2014. “It is not someone else’s problem. It is a problem of the whole world. SARS took the airplane to come to Canada; viruses cross borders now.”

“We can increase the health access in our country and the world... by working together.”

– Principal Fortier



Owen Egan

➤ McGill Principal and Vice-Chancellor Suzanne Fortier at the first Global is Local conference

Far from hollow words, global health is a topic of importance to McGill University, one of the key areas identified in its Strategic Research Plan. Under the banner of Global Health Programs, housed in the Faculty of Medicine, activities are prevalent across the Faculty—in the Ingram School of Nursing, in the School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, in the Department of Family Medicine and in the Department of Surgery, among others.

A truly successful program requires contribution and collaboration within the Faculty of Medicine, but also across disciplines with groups from across the University’s diverse faculties. This move towards the engagement of a multidisciplinary team working on global health has been a key driver for the activities of Global Health Programs at McGill under the leadership of Interim Director Dr. Dan Deckelbaum, BMUS’96, MDCM’01, during the last year, and an impetus for the development of this conference.

“People talking together is what will allow global health at McGill to be a success,” said Deckelbaum. “Health care alone cannot reduce health disparities,” he continued, quoting Haile T. Debas, MDCM ’63, world renowned global health leader and surgeon. “This needs to include a multidisciplinary team, created through partnerships. There is an African proverb, which says, “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

The May conference provided an opportunity to assemble key players in global health from across the University, including faculty and student representatives from medicine, management, law, engineering and agriculture, among others.

As its title suggests, a focal point of the day’s discussions centered on how global health issues start at home. “Global really is local,” said Deckelbaum. “We need to address health disparities within our own communities. It is a social responsibility for us as a university to address these disparities.”



Elizabeth Dickie

➤ Nursing student Vanessa Lavergne, BScN’13, taking routine blood pressure measurement in a rural health post in Chitepani village of Kalika district, Nepal



Vanessa Lavergne

➤ Husband, wife and their oxen working the fields in rural Thullosahar village of Kalika district during field work completed by McGill nursing students in Nepal



➤ McGill surgeon Tarek Razek , BSc'89, MDCM'93, and Medical student Susan Mengxiao Ge (foreground) during the panel session on Establishing Structured Paradigms for Student Development and Education in global health



Owen Egan

➤ McGill's Madhukar Pai, Associate Director of the McGill International TB Centre and incoming Director of McGill Global Health Programs, addresses the audience during a panel session on partnership building at the Global is Local conference.

"We see disparity in our own country," noted Principal Fortier. "Some of us have the best access, while in other parts of the country and the world, children are dying of malnutrition, dying from lack of clean water, dying from AIDS, dying from tuberculosis. There is no equality around the planet or even our own country."

One essential way to make an impact in global health is to engage the student body—the creative, innovative minds that are at the core of any outstanding academic institution. Surveying what students are doing on their own provides a reflection of where their interests lie. There are currently about twenty student clubs and organizations involved in global health, and Deckelbaum says McGill Global Health is in the process of creating more robust programs to provide students with structured opportunities to participate. "As we engage in global health, we are improving ourselves as global citizens," says Deckelbaum.

"We can increase the health access in our country and the world," noted Principal Fortier. "It is not a zero sum game. We can do this by working together."

*A plethora of initiatives and resources are available to students and faculty across the University under the banner of McGill's Global Health Programs, from courses and electives to grants and photo contests. To find out more about Global Health Programs at McGill, visit: <http://www.mcgill.ca/globalhealth/> **{JASON CLEMENT}***