

Supercourse Newsletter
Nov. 4 2013

An Apple a Day keeps the doctor away

We recently returned from Kazakhstan from a very important meeting on personal medicine and global health which was run at the Center for Life Sciences at Nazarbayev University by Dr. Zhumadilov (head of NU Center for Live Sciences). It is his mission to establish a global health center at the Center for Life sciences, and we will be helping him. Kazakhstan in the past few years has been the highest publishing country in Central Asia, however, it is number 94 for countries of the world. We hope to double the number of publications in Global Health and prevention in 5 years, as well as to improve all science and markedly improve the 94 ranking.

“What we’re doing here will send a giant ripple through the Universe”
(Steve Jobs)

You all might want to visit Kazakhstan and NU in the next few years. NU’s curriculum is all in English, and they are looking for some top flight scientists to take faculty position not only in global health, but all areas of medicine and the sciences. If you are interested, please write to me at ronaldlaporte@gmail.com, and we will get you in contact.

The people in Kazakhstan are wonderful. One of our main collaborators is Shalkar Adambekov. He and his wonderful girl friend Ainur had us over to his flat for a Besbarmak (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kazakh_cuisine) dinner. Besbarmak is boiled horse meat, and it is excellent. The name Baebarmak means 5 fingers, in other words the eating of the meal with ones hands. Also visions of Silver, Flicka, Seabiscuit and Mr. Ed went through my head, but it did not take long to like this wonderful dish.

“It is remarkable how closely the history of the apple tree is connected with that of man” (Henry David Thoreau)

The meeting was fascinating. I think you might be interested in my talk, it was titled Global Health, Apple to Apple.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KenURQO8rRo&feature=youtu.be>

The concept was that Apples originated in Kazakhstan (GWAS testing). The future of health and science in Kazakhstan/world is from the KZ apple to the KZ iphone Apple.

“Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton was the one who asked why”
(Bernard Baruch)

Global Health and Personalized Medicine, NU university conference. The conference at Nazarbayev University was very important to link experts from the molecular fields, such as genetics and genomics, with experts from the field of global health.

Shalkar Adambekov, demonstrated that KZ is currently the leader of scientific productivity in Central Asia, and scientific productivity more than doubled in the past 10 years. However, KZ is ranked only 94 in the world based on research publications and the other 4 countries much worse. Thus, there is considerable need for improvement of scientific productivity in the region. One of possible solutions to encourage scientists to publish in English language scientific journals, including the Central Asian Journal of Global Health (cajgh.pitt.edu)

edited by Linked, Adambekov, and other scientists around the world. There was considerable interest in Dr. Linkov's talk on obesity, as the obesity epidemic is starting to take off in Central Asia.

The group had several important meetings during the conference, including meeting the local librarians, including Jim Agee (general manager of Nazarbayev University Library) to discuss the possibility of hosting a copy of the Global Health Network Supercourse (www.pitt.edu/~super1) on the Nazarbayev University Library server. The group also met with Michael S. Klecheski, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of the USA in Astana, Kazakhstan to discuss public health priorities of the region. We invited the new US ambassador to Kazakhstan. He arrived to Kazakhstan on October 16 and kindly visited Nazarbayev University on October 17 to be introduced to the leaders of the University. The group also met some of the leadership of Nazarbayev University, including Simon Jones (NU provost) and Zhakysybai Zhumadilov (head of NU Center for Live Sciences). Lastly, we met Nurlan Ybyraiym, Chairman of the Committee of Science in the Ministry of Education of Kazakhstan and discussed KZ US faculty and student exchange. There was considerable interest for the Supercourse team to help the NU Global Health agenda.

Our Supercourse group already established a network of over 1400 individuals in Central Asia, 800 of which are in Kazakhstan. Shalkar Adambekov and Sholpan Askarova, are finalizing two manuscripts on research productivity in Central Asia. One of the next steps discussed by Dr. Zhumadilov, Head of Center for Life Sciences at Nazarbayev University, is increasing Nazarbayev University research portfolio by building more projects in the field of global health with a focus on the Molecular to the Planet, especially radiation health.

"You have to be burning with an idea, or a problem, or a wrong you want to right. If you're not passionate from the start, you'll never stick it out"
(Steve Jobs)

Help Desk Questions: We are very pleased how rapidly we have been able to set up help desks for research methods across the world. However, once again there are few questions. Francois Sauer came up with an interesting reason: 'In reference to the "help desk" my presupposition is that scientists may be very concerned to show their weakness in statistics!' I checked with various of the BA supercourse help desks, and they too are not having many people come to them. Over 1.5 million people know about this, yet we still have only 6 people asking questions. If young people are willing to call Apple with questions, it is not clear why budding investigators are not calling us. I have been now thinking about this for 2-3 months and just do not have an idea how to break down these barriers. I would appreciate your help, please talk with your students and junior faculty to find out why they are not using the help desk, and then write to me at ronaldlaporte@gmail.com

"Those who seek learning should know certain essential conditions with which they cannot achieve their goal. First, do not attempt to do so for the sake of profit. (Abai) (We in global health and academia worldwide know this very, very well.)

Shalkar and Ainur gave us a wonderful book of Abai, (1845-1904), poet, composer, translator. He spoke wonderful thoughts about knowledge and wisdom.

Faina's picks of the week

Lecture of the week

The Pittsburgh Bridge: A Gateway for the Future lecture by Dr. Robert A.

Branch, MD FRCP, University of Pittsburgh

<http://www.pitt.edu/~super1/lecture/lec50871/index.htm>

This lecture provides a unique perspective on the health of communities in the United States, focusing on some of the emerging challenges such as obesity, sedentary life style, and low access to health education. As one of the solutions to this problem Dr. Branch sees involvement of adolescent population to serve as a conduit of change and improvement of health.

Article of the week

We are very fortunate to have a new article from Alexei Korobitsyn about TB Case Detection in Tajikistan, accessible at

<http://cajgh.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/cajgh/article/view/48>

Despite the fact chronic diseases are among leading causes of death in Central Asia, TB poses a big problem in the region. This article has two key goals: (1) To identify the main obstacles to increasing TB Detection in Tajikistan and (2) To identify interventions that improve TB detection. We would like to encourage all participants of the Supercourse to submit articles to the Central Asian Journal of Global Health cajgh.pitt.edu

If you have any questions, please send them to ronaldlaporte@gmail.com

"Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity" (WHO)

Best Regards,

Faina, Ron, Zhaksybai, Shalkar, Sholpan, Aiym, Kyle, Sean, Rob, Eugene, Francois, Nicholas, Ohanyido, Gil, Mita, Ismail, Eric, Kawkab, Vint, Ali, Olga, Maria, Eman