

# The Future of Global Mental Health

written by Kathleen M. Pike, PhD

July 23, 2021

*Talk about the future often focuses on technological innovation, space travel, and the discovery of life forms in galaxies that we can barely imagine. As a professor, my view of the future is much more exciting. It comes into focus every time I rest my eyes on my students. This summer, fourteen young people from diverse backgrounds and with a wide range of passions were interns with Columbia faculty through the Global Mental Health Summer Internship Program. See photo below. It is a breathtaking sight and one that leaves me feeling optimistic and excited for what will be.*



*Working on projects around the world that impact diverse communities, including adolescents in Mozambique, sex workers in Uganda, migrant workers in South America, and the global workforce, our 2021 Global Mental Health Summer Interns learned about community-based interventions, culture and mental health, social and structural inequalities and their impact on mental health, and more. They learned about innovative strategies and solutions that Columbia faculty and research groups are studying and implementing. We have been thrilled by this amazing class of interns and invite you to learn a bit about them here.*

**Stella Biehl.** Stella is a rising senior at Colorado College, majoring in Neuroscience and minoring in Studio Art. Her interests lie in women's health, reproductive health, pediatrics, and the intersection between art and mental health. In her past studies, she has researched the effects of bipolar disorder on pregnancy and childbirth and the efficacy of inpatient mental health treatment for communities of color. This summer, Stella worked with Dr. Reuben Robbins and his team on developing Neuroscreen, a tablet app that tests neurocognitive impairment in adolescents perinatally infected with HIV. This project aims to increase accessibility to HIV treatment in low and middle-income countries. To complement the team's research, Stella completed an abstract investigating the relationship between past tablet usage and Neuroscreen test performance. She is considering a career in pediatrics, obstetrics, or art therapy.

**Julia Boca.** Julia is a rising senior at Wellesley College, majoring in Neuroscience and Psychology. She worked this summer with PhD candidate Lyla Sunyoung and Dr. Susan Witte on a research project concerning the financial diaries of sex workers in Uganda. The project began with analyzing a worldwide database for intimate partner violence (IPV) and its correlation to financial stability, drug use and sex safety precautions. Using this, the team researched previously unexplored connections between sex workers and enhanced financial literacy

by employing various research methods utilized by researchers worldwide. Julia plans to apply the skills and assets honed during her GMHP summer internship as she continues her journey to pursue a career in higher education.

**Cogie Celzo**. Cogie is a rising senior at Pomona College, majoring in Psychological Science and pursuing a minor in Asian American Studies. Growing up in the Philippines and later in the US, he witnessed first-hand how culture, setting, and societal structures impact mental health. Cogie has worked with the Culture, Race, and Brain Lab at Pomona College, examining how cultural orientation affects cognition, employing EEG and event-related potential methodology. He also worked with the Bulosan Center for Filipino Studies at UC Davis on research around contemporary Filipino-American issues in mental health, such as the mental health outcomes of Filipino collegiate students in the U.S. and the migration trends of Filipino overseas workers. This summer, Cogie worked alongside a fellow GMHP intern with Dr. Sabrina Herмосilla on the early stages of a systematic review that looks to explicate migration's health and mental health consequences on child migrants. Ultimately, Cogie aspires to become a professor of psychological science.

**Nywel Cheaye**. Nywel is a rising senior at Vassar College majoring in Science, Technology, & Society (STS) with a concentration in bioethics and medical sociology. Her interest in mental health stems largely from seeing how it is used to criminalize Black and Brown bodies in contemporary society and the impact of incarceration on people who battle with substance abuse and addiction. Furthermore, she is dedicated to advocating for the mental health of survivors of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Nywel has seen how untreated trauma can severely impact communities through her familial ties to Liberia, whose wounds from a 14-year civil war are still present. As a GMHP intern, Nywel worked with Dr. Philip Kreniske on novel research focused on using mobile technology to prevent HIV and other mental health issues amongst youth in Uganda. For this project, Nywel collected background information on text message-based interventions and strategies for appropriate ways to deliver messages that both educate patients and motivate them to seek resources. She has also taken the initiative to expand this project by adapting an HIV risk assessment tool and PrEP eligibility screener for youth in Uganda.

**Rafael Cortes**. Rafael is a rising junior at the University of Michigan studying Community & Global Public Health and Neuroscience with a minor in Science, Technology, and Society. He is passionate about addressing health disparities that disproportionately affect marginalized and vulnerable populations. During the GMHP summer internship, Rafael worked closely with Dr. Kathleen Pike on developing a multidimensional index assessing organizational capacity to address mental health in the workplace. He assisted Dr. Pike in conducting systematic literature reviews, synthesizing data to quantify the assessment metric, and collaborating with community stakeholders to gain perspective on the various factors that matter when creating meaningful change in workplace mental health. In the future, Rafael plans to attend medical school and become a physician-advocate who treats patients holistically by integrating the cultural, political, socioeconomic, and personal dimensions of health that often go unnoticed.

**Erela Datuwei**. Erela is a rising senior at the University of Southern California, double majoring in Health and Human Sciences and French. Erela is also a Master of Public Health candidate with a concentration in health services and policy. She is particularly interested in how the origins of western medicine inform its current practices and systems and what reforms might take aim at making healthcare systems more accessible and equitable. During her internship, Erela worked under Dr. Geoffrey Reed and Dr. Tahlia Rebello to develop materials for the Global Mental Health Academy — an interactive online course that will familiarize mental health professionals at all career stages with the ICD-11 Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines for Mental, Behavioural and Neurodevelopmental Disorders. Erela also participated in an Africa Mental Health Foundation initiative to address the high prevalence of intimate partner violence (IPV) in Kenya.

**Eve Hiyori Estrada**. Eve is a rising senior at the University of Southern California, pursuing a major in Health and the Human Sciences as part of the International Health concentration. She is also minoring in East Asian

Languages and Cultures. Having lived throughout the U.S. and Asia, Eve developed the desire to work in an area that would benefit the global community. Her ethnic and national background has afforded her multiple perspectives on mental health, which has inspired her focus in this area. This summer, Eve honed her research and intervention implementation skills while working with Dr. Sapna Mendon-Plasek on a project for a feedback mechanism loop across multiple tiers of stakeholders, which would facilitate engagement with data to improve the delivery of services and patient outcomes.

**Huma Manjra.** Huma is a rising senior at Northwestern University studying Neuroscience with a minor in Sociology. Her passions are centered around understanding and addressing the stigma and barriers of access to mental health care in Muslim populations and marginalized communities. She is also interested in investigating effective community-based mental health interventions and program design. During the summer, Huma worked with Dr. Kate Lovero on her research around trauma in adolescent populations in Mozambique. She contributed to a literature review and manuscript preparation for a study investigating the impact of potentially traumatic events on adolescents' mental health. As an aspiring physician, she hopes to combine her passion for global mental health and medicine in the future by providing integrated care to underserved communities and researching the impact that physical illnesses have on overall mental well-being in primary care.

**Jennifer Martínez Sánchez.** Jennifer is a student at Georgetown University, majoring in Sociology and minoring in Public Health and English. Given her experience with healthcare, Jennifer believes that medicine is a form of social advocacy. She aims to study how social and institutional contexts, such as employment, housing, food security, and immigration influence health quality among vulnerable populations. Jennifer also hopes to encompass these stories of humanity through an MD/MPH program-to truly visualize and implement "care for the whole person." As a GMHP intern, Jennifer worked with Dr. Annika Sweetland and Dr. Jennifer Mootz to build mental health capacity in Brazil and Mozambique. She researched the neuroscience of learning and memory, applying her findings to develop interactive educational materials to train local providers and non-specialists in evidence-based interventions. Going forward, Jennifer aims to advocate for Undocumented America in the field of global mental health as she plans to study how intergenerational trauma and legal violence led to decreased physical and mental health outcomes during the COVID-19 pandemic for undocumented essential workers.

**Mukund Nair.** Mukund is a rising senior at Williams College studying Religion with minors in Public Health and Neuroscience. A desire to help others underlies his interest in medicine and public health. Mental health, in particular, became an area of focus for him because the stories and life experiences of those around him have demonstrated to him the power of the mind. In addition, Mukund loves working with youth, which has compelled him to explore mental health relating to youth populations. As a GMHP summer intern, Mukund worked with Dr. Claire Greene on developing an implementation plan for her proposed study measuring the feasibility and effectiveness of culturally adapted group therapy for Panamanian and Ecuadorian migrant communities. This work conveyed an understanding of the study's practical limitations and research requirements, which enabled him to successfully create a set of standard operating procedures to help guide researchers on the ground in Ecuador and Panama. His experience has laid the foundation for a career in public health. He hopes to serve his global community by working with nonprofits and the government to ensure equitable health (both mental and physical) outcomes in communities through policy and grass-roots efforts.

**Mattea Parker.** Born and raised in Dayton, Ohio, Mattea is a rising senior at Tuskegee University, majoring in Psychology. Her interests lie in intergenerational behaviors, historical trauma's impacts on health, and pathways to risk and resilience among youth and families connected to societal, structural, and biological elements. This summer, under the guidance of Dr. Ali Giusto, Mattea led the coordination of an ongoing qualitative implementation project in Kenya. This work helped her acquire project management skills, which enabled her to create and continuously build the standard operating procedure for the project. Mattea also had the opportunity to sit in on meetings for a second project concerned with analyzing transcripts and understanding pathways and drivers of change in the study pilot. This experience gave Mattea exposure to data

analysis and insight into cross-referencing with different places, institutions, and people. She plans to apply these skills and knowledge as she pursues a career as a clinician.

**Padmini Asha Retnasami-Kennedy.** Asha is a rising senior from Smith College, with a double major in Psychology and Biological Sciences and concentrations in Neuroscience, Ecology, and Genetics. Hailing from Mauritius, a subtropical island off the coast of Madagascar, Asha grew up in a diverse, multi-cultural environment. She developed an interest in psychology from an early age and has helped found the Powerful Women's Society, an organization in Mauritius that aids women in escaping and recovering from abusive situations. As a GMHP summer intern, Asha worked with Neha Kinariwalla on two projects — the Humanology Project and Pathos Pieces — focusing on de-stigmatizing mental illness, increasing mental health awareness, and capturing the full humanity of those living with mental illness through writing and story-telling. In the future, Asha hopes to reduce the stigma of mental health and improve the quality of treatment through new and innovative therapies in foreign countries, such as India and those of Africa, as well as her own home country, Mauritius.

**Hikari Shumsky.** Hikari is a rising senior at Columbia University studying Human Rights specializing in East Asian Studies and concentrating in Ethnicity and Race Studies. She is especially interested in collective and intergenerational mental health issues and trauma: how different groups—ie. nationalities, ethnicities, and races—process and grapple with disastrous events. She works closely with asylum seekers in New York City navigating the federal immigration system and has further developed an interest in trauma-informed social work and legal assistance. This summer, Hikari worked with Dr. Sabrina Herмосilla to systematically review the consequences of migration on youth health outcomes, helping the research team develop and discuss review parameters. She will be continuing with the team as the review progresses. This opportunity to conduct broad-scale health research has complemented her experiences in immigration law and policy.

**Tina Vong.** Tina is a rising senior at New York University pursuing a BS in Applied Psychology. Her interest in global mental health stems from recognizing the lack of access to mental health services in East-Asian countries. Specifically, in her hometown, Macau, Tina saw how the stigma around mental illness continues to hinder the growth of the mental health field. As a summer intern in the GMHP, she worked with Dr. Geoffrey Reed and Dr. Tahilia Rebello to revise the chapters on Mental, Behavioral, and Neurodevelopmental Disorders for the ICD-10. Tina developed materials for the Global Mental Health Academy, an online course that trains mental health professionals on the ICD-11 Clinical Descriptions and Diagnostic Guidelines. In addition, she worked on an IRB proposal for a study on women experiencing intimate partner violence in Kenya.

*The future is written in the present. This year's Global Mental Health Summer Interns are adding their voice to the story of mental health and social justice with compassion, commitment, and conviction. Whether they pursue careers in mental health or other professions, I know they will make mental health matter. Thank you to our 2021 Summer Interns. Thank you to all our faculty mentors. Thank you to the generous philanthropists who have funded this program. The future of mental health is here with our interns, and it is bright.*