



Introduction

- During the COVID-19 pandemic traditional global health trips have been suspended, leaving a gap for students wishing to receive exposure to global health during medical school.
- Originally chosen as international teaching assistants (TAs), fourth year medical students Amanda Kardys, Nina Dawson, and Trina Thornburgh were affected by COVID-19 and were unable to travel for their elective in July 2020. In the spirit of flexibility, they embraced the opportunity to safely explore global health through multimedia resources online for one month. At the end of the month, their goal was to share their new global health knowledge with other students through a novel reading elective.

Methods

- The three TAs met with their advisor, Dr. Benjamin Clements, virtually to discuss topics and create the structure of the course.
 - Week One:** Discuss themes and narrow to five core themes
 - Weeks Two-Three:** Each TA explored 1-2 themes through articles, podcast, YouTube videos, and multimedia interactive websites and presented the findings to the group
 - Week Four:** TAs worked collaboratively on curating a succinct required reading list for week one of the elective, structuring the second week of the elective, and writing learning objectives
- In addition, in week four global health partners input on these themes was elicited to diversify the viewpoints on these topics. The partners were sent questions pertaining to each topic and asked to respond in written or video form. They were also encouraged to describe experiences with other pertinent global health topics.

Description

- As TAs, the three students created a two-week reading course for fourth year medical students at The Larner College of Medicine (LCOM) on five major themes of global health:
 - Global burden of disease*
 - Global health organizations*
 - Ethics and impact of international aid*
 - Access, health literacy and cultural context*
 - Climate change*
- Of note, international health partners play an integral part in teaching these themes through pre-recorded lessons, as well as participating in in-person sessions when available.

Structure of Course

- In week one, enrolled students receive a preset reading list for one topic per day, video talks from global partners teaching on these themes, and a supplemental reading list. They then produce a one-page reflective essay per day on what they discovered about each theme.
- In week two, students apply what they learned about each theme to a specific area of global health such as women's health, mental health, or chronic diseases in global health. This application culminates in a 15–20-minute virtual presentation to other elective students and available global health partners.

Results

- The proposed two-week reading course curriculum was virtually presented by the three TA students on August 28, 2020 to LCOM faculty and international partners, where it was positively received. This confirmed the importance of this course and its link to international partners.
- The course was submitted to the LCOM medical curriculum committee (MCC) and was accepted. It will be offered during typical residency interview months. Students are currently signed up for January 2021.



Fig 1. A snapshot of Tendai Machingaidze, an international Zimbabwean partner, providing perspective on the concept of "Brain Drain"

- International partners submitted videos, as seen in Figure 1, with first-hand descriptions of their experiences with these topics.
- The effectiveness of the curriculum will be reviewed through evaluations provided by the medical students participating in the course, highlighting positive aspects of the course and areas where improvement is needed.

Discussion

- In this uncertain time, creating a virtual link to global health, enhanced by instruction from international partners, can prove vital for creating a foundation for future physicians' global health careers.
- Organizations such as the World Health Organization, World Bank, and Global Fund are important entities in global health which students are exposed to in this elective.¹
- Students are challenged through this course to think of the ethics of clinical electives they participate in, and the impact they have on the international communities.²
- Limitations of this course include time-zone differences for working with international partners, no hands-on, in-person experience currently available, and motivation of participating students to engage with materials independently.
- When the pandemic and restrictions have lifted, this course can continue to be offered to students as an online elective because it builds a strong foundation without requiring travel. In addition, this curriculum has the potential to be integrated into the resources available to students who travel abroad in the future, giving them a better understanding of the context in which their experience occurs.

References

- Clinton, C., Sridhar, D., & Sridhar, D. L. (2017). *Governing global health: who runs the world and why?*. Oxford University Press.
- Holland, T., & Holland, A. (2011). *First, Do No Harm: A Qualitative Research Documentary*. [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/22008886>