

# Global Health Research and Education

Andrew Dykens MD, MPH

I would like to express my eternal gratitude to all within the UIC DFCM and the Center for Global Health for the extraordinary support for our partnership in Senegal. It has, without question, been a very challenging year. Nonetheless, we continue to make considerable strides.



## *Key highlights and updates:*

Our main research project - a peer education program in women's groups to improve cervical cancer screening uptake in the rural Kedougou region - is severely disrupted due to COVID. We missed two data collection points but have been able to reorganize and implement our final intervention across all sites. We plan to collect final impact data in April 2021. We have also published four articles related to this work and partnership and have continued to submit grant applications in order to expand upon our work.

UIC is also a formal partner for a \$267,000 two-year grant through Rotary International titled "*Building Cervical Cancer Prevention Services in Senegal*" that initiated in early 2020. Despite COVID, and due to extraordinary local leadership and community engagement, using a Train the Trainer approach (and through responsible adaptations consistent with local policies regarding COVID prevention), we have conducted 28 trainings over the last 10 months. We have trained 695 health personnel (administrators, midwives, and community health workers) across 182 facilities in all seven districts of the Tambacounda Region in Southeastern Senegal. We have also provided equipment such as specula, thermocoagulators, and handheld devices for facility records and reporting to ensure adequate resources at all locations.

We have worked closely with the Senegal National Ministry of Health and Social Action to develop appropriate referral systems for the treatment of positive cases including chemotherapy, surgical services, and radiotherapy at the national level. We will be distributing locally appropriate educational materials to all sites in six local languages and French, after final approval by the Senegal National Information and Education Program at the Ministry of Health and Social Action. After distribution, we will scale up screening efforts. This year, we have screened 1,365 women. These capacity-building activities will be repeated in the neighboring Kedougou region in 2021. We are currently working on three publications relevant to this work.

We are exploring additional projects including the very exciting opportunity to implement a population level Senegal cancer registry in Dakar, Senegal (which does not currently exist) and a pilot study focused on the strengthening of mental health services in Senegal. External to Senegal, we are exploring a project in Nepal focused on capacity building in nursing to improve mental health services for geriatric patients.

Despite obstacles, we remain committed to work that strengthens health equity in highly marginalized populations. I am, personally, very proud to be at an institution that values the ideals of social justice and among colleagues who are dedicated to this ideal in a broad range of highly relevant and impactful areas. Likewise, I am extraordinarily indebted to my mentors in the US and Senegal as well as my colleagues at all levels of the health system in Senegal, at UIC, and at the Consortium of Universities for Global Health.



*Healthcare providers in the district of Bakel review the cervical cancer registry and referral books*



*Bajenu Gox (Community Health Workers) attending information and education training in Bakel, Senegal*