

Our Mission

The Program in Global Mental Health utilizes the students, residents, and faculty of Mount Sinai to enhance access to mental health services for people in East Harlem and around the world. This is accomplished through program development and training and education, with research done in support of these service and educational imperatives.

Global Mental Health in *La Isla Bonita*

Ludwing Florez-Salamanca, MD

Dr. Ludwing Florez-Salamanca travelled as a PGY-IV psychiatry resident in the global mental health residency track to Belize from January to February 2017 to continue our longstanding program supervising, training, and mentoring that country's mental health nurse practitioners and non-specialist health care staff. He was accompanied and supervised by Dr. Anna Rosen.

Being born and raised in a foreign country, global mental health has been one of my interests for many years. Personally, I feel very lucky for what I have and I feel the need to give back to communities in need, not only here in the United States, but also in other countries. Earlier this year, as a part of my fourth year global mental health elective rotation with the Program in Global Mental Health, I spent 2 months in Belize, the paradisiacal Central American country that inspired Madonna to write one of her songs.

While collaborating with the Belize Ministry of Health and working closely with the clinicians of the mental health department, I had the opportunity to get to know many of their assets and their limitations, both as a country and health system. They face the constant challenges of shortages of resources and of staff, but try to compensate with key elements when providing mental health services to a community in great need: tremendous motivation, strong sense of responsibility, genuine warmth and a sincere smile.

During my collaboration, I supervised and taught psychiatric nurse practitioners and educated primary care doctors in mental health topics, aiming to increase their capability of doing integrated care, collaborated with the development of new ideas and saw a wide variety of patients. The rotation allowed me the chance to perform different roles as a clinician, educator, supervisor and administrator. Very few experiences in my professional life have been that powerful and comprehensive. The experience was not only academically and professionally beneficial, but also personally satisfying and tremendously enriching. It was overall such an extraordinary opportunity that I am already working on next year's collaboration, this time as an attending supervisor.

Program Partnerships:

- Jarabacoa Hospital, Jarabacoa, La Veg Province, Dominican Republic
- Grenada Ministry of Health
- HaitiChildren, Williamson, Haiti
- The Minds Foundation, in collaboration with GMERS Medical College and Sumandeep Vidyapeeth University, Gujarat, India
- The Aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011
- The Carter Center and the Ministry of Health, Monrovia, Liberia
- Belize Ministry of Health
- East Harlem Health Outreach Project
- The CARA Family Detention Project, Dilley, Texas



Dr. Anna Rosen (Dr. Florez-Salamanca's attending supervisor) and a Belizean nurse practitioner on a home visit in the jungles of south Belize

2017-2018 Academic Year Program

Faculty

- Cindy Aaronson, PhD
- Amy Aloysi, MD, MPH
- Ben Angarita, MD
- Amy Cushing-Savvi, LCSW
- Lanre Dokun, MD
- Steve Fayer, MD
- Rachel Fischer, MD
- Ludwing Florez-Salamanca, MD
- Vicki Gluhoski, PhD
- Gary Katzman, MD
- Jeffrey Kleinberg, PhD, MPH
- Daniella Loh, MD
- Glenn Martin, MD
- Milana Mor, MD
- Andrew Pearson, MD
- Anna Rosen, MD
- Diana Samuel, MD
- Joshua Stein, MD
- James Squires, MD
- Hiwot Woldu, MD
- Robert Yanagisawa, MD

PGY-3

- Zebib Abraham, MD
- Joy Choi, MD
- Daniel DeFrancisco, MD
- Michael MacIntyre, MD
- Rachel Wiedermann, MD

PGY-4

- Issa Bagayogo, MD, PhD
- Gabriella Goodfriend, MD
- Jesse Hanna, MD
- Yasin Ibrahim, MD
- Nigel Kennedy, MD
- Brenda Ratemo, MD
- Casey Smith, MD
- Samantha Swetter, MD



Dr. Aloysi and Dr. Katzman in their Liberian outfits with the 20 students in their Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT) Course

In May 2017, Dr. Katzman and Dr. Aloysi, both faculty at the Icahn School of Medicine, ran a week-long seminar in Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT) for a cohort of 20 mental health clinicians in Congotown, Liberia. The seminar was in collaboration with the Carter Center and the Liberian Ministry of Health.

Liberia, a country of 4.6 million, with one full time psychiatrist, has fewer than 200 mental health clinicians. Only a small fraction of the population has access to any specialty care, especially those suffering from psychiatric disorders and epilepsy. Recovering from two civil wars that spanned nearly 14 years, an Ebola outbreak ending in 2015, endemic malaria and poverty, the country struggles with undiagnosed and untreated depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, and epilepsy. Given frequent shortages of the few medications which are available, including amitriptyline, fluoxetine, chlorpromazine, haloperidol, carbamazepine, and valproic acid, psychotherapy can be a vital modality of care. In addition, many of the difficulties they face are directly related to environmental stressors or relationship distress, which may benefit from a direct problem solving psychotherapeutic approach, and may not require the use of medications.

Those who attended the seminar were mostly nurses and a few physician assistants, all whom had previously attended a six-month training course in mental health and epilepsy management. The Cognitive-Behavior Therapy (CBT) course provided training to identify and replace maladaptive or unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving, with healthier and more strategic ones. Drs. Katzman and Aloysi also included the important modalities of sensation and imagery, as useful relaxation and imaginal practice tools.

The scenarios brought to attention by the 20 students in the class included a wide range of issues: children with epilepsy stigmatized by classmates and teachers, infidelity in relationships, social rejection of women without children, and men's threatened self-esteem in the setting of financial stressors and unemployment, rendering them unable to care for their families. In addition to a didactic portion, students practiced the problem focused techniques in the classroom as well as when they went home each evening.

The Program in Global Mental Health will continue to provide support to the mental health clinicians in Liberia via telepsychiatry and yearly refresher courses led by residents and faculty, on CBT and other topics of local interest.