



**UNIVERSITY OF LIBERIA SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (ULSOPH) GRADUATES ITS FIRST BATCH OF STUDENTS (2020/2021 ACADEMIC YEAR)**



The University of Liberia School of Public Health (ULSOPH) graduated its first batch of students on the 21st of March, 2022. Amongst those who graduated were two females and seven males; one from the Health System Management track and eight from the Applied Epidemiology track.

Two Students graduated with distinctions and were inducted into the University of Liberia Society of Honors; Mr. Adeen T. Juwillie, Jr (Epidemiology) and T. Ruston Yarnko (Epidemiology). The activities leading to the commencement convocation were colorful and exciting. Congratulations to our first graduates (Class of Deuces- 2020/2021).

**11 MPH STUDENTS DEFENDED THEIR THESIS RESEARCH TO THE UL GRADUATE SCHOOL.**



As part of their graduation requirements, ULSOPH students must undertake a thesis project. Eleven students conducted and defended thesis projects in December 2021-January 2022. This reflected the culmination of a more than six-month process of proposal-writing, ethics approval, and data collection

and analysis. Project topics were selected with consideration of their potential for producing evidence of public health significance in the context of Liberia. Please follow our social media pages to see highlights about the inaugural theses projects.

Students are currently working to disseminate their findings through participation in conferences, preparation of manuscripts for publication, and conversations with stakeholders. Some are also working collaboratively with graduates of the Q4D-ULSOPH R Coding and Biostatistics Certificate program (<https://www.q4dlab.org/r-coding-and-biostatistics>) to conduct more in-depth analyses of their data.

**WAC-CREP CONFERENCE ULCHS STUDENTS SHARE THEIR RESEARCH WITH THE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY**



Five MPH students and one MD student presented their research at the 5th Annual conference of the West Africa Consortium for Clinical Research on Epidemic Pathogens (WAC-CREP), which took place from March 17th to 19th, 2022, in Yamoussoukro, Côte d'Ivoire. Four students attended the conference in person, while two others participated virtually. The students were selected after submitting abstracts on original research with relevance to Community.

## DISSEMINATING RESEARCH FINDINGS: ULSOPH-LED CONSORTIUM ON ABORTION-RELATED RESEARCH CAPACITY AND EVIDENCE HOLDS STAKEHOLDER MEETING



The Consortium for Strengthening Abortion-Related Research Capacity and Evidence in Liberia (CoSARL) includes researchers and experts from three institutions, namely University of Liberia School of Public Health, Institute for Population Studies and Guttmacher Institute in New York, who are entering their second year of collaborative work. On March 24, 2022, CoSARL members held a stakeholders' meeting to share their findings from an online assessment of abortion-related research skills and a mapping of existing evidence in Liberia (published and grey literature). They highlighted how their work to date has identified gaps and opportunities for local evidence generation on abortion-related issues. As you may be aware, abortion is legally restricted or not readily

accessible in Liberia. Due to the legal restrictions and high levels of stigma surrounding abortion, collecting accurate and reliable data on abortion in community-based or facility settings is very difficult. Based on this, and to bridge this substantial gap of limited information on abortion in the context, individual and institutional capacity should be strengthened to plan and implement abortion-related research in Liberia effectively.

The results of CoSARL's projects are intended to guide productive conversations around future evidence generation. The stakeholders' meeting, which was attended by a total of about 30 individuals from institutions in Liberia and the United States culminated with discussion of work to strengthen abortion-related research capacity and evidence that should be prioritized over the next one year.

## NEW RESEARCH COLLABORATION BETWEEN ULSOPH, MINISTRY OF HEALTH, UNICEF, AND POWER OF NUTRITION.



The University of Liberia School of Public Health (ULSOPH), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) and UNICEF, and leading an 18-month mixed-method study to evaluate the national program for treatment of wasting, Integrated Management of Acute Malnutrition (IMAM), among children aged 6-59 months and their mothers or caregivers. The project is building upon an assessment done in 2018-2019 to quantify geographic heterogeneity in coverage of IMAM and related interventions. In addition, in-depth



monitoring and evaluation (M&E) via analysis of routine data and key informant interviews will dive deeper into programmatic successes and challenges. Participatory action planning, led by MoH, will be responsive to findings from the M&E to support health facilities in improving coverage. It is another example of how the ULSOPH is committed to ensuring that research evidence translates to action. A related objective of the work is to build capacity at the ULSOPH to conduct the proposed methods so that such assessments can be carried out routinely and

sustainably going forward, in collaboration with MoH and international stakeholders. The project is being supported by Power of Nutrition through a grant from Irish Aid.

## MY EXPERIENCE AS A PUBLIC HEALTH STUDENT AND A RESEARCH ASSISTANT WITH THE UL SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH (ULSOPH).

- By Malcom B. Weller, MPH student, Applied Epidemiology Concentration

My experience as a public health student and a research assistant with the University Of Liberia School Of Public Health (ULSOPH).

Entering into the studies of public health, specifically the University Of Liberia School Of Public Health (ULSOPH) was in a state of dilemma as to whether it will be yet another theoretical journey or promises to have some practical hands-on during the course of my study. This has completely changed over my stay in the school since I met hard-working lecturers and professors with in-depth knowledge of the subject matter and got involved with different practicums. Now, I am a research assistant on a study supported by the Sabin vaccine institute. As a research assistant at the University Of Liberia School Of Public Health (ULSOPH),



I have moved from sitting in as a trainee to being a trainer at the front of the room, on study protocols, techniques on data collection and administering informed consent. As a research assistant, I now have the opportunity to get involved with discussions involving stakeholders and policy makers rather than just sitting and listening to discussions from these actors in the health sector. This has clearly and completely erased the dilemma once held in mind as I am now having a pretty good practical and hands-on learning experience.

The fact that I have had the opportunity to play and still play these leading roles, it has and still gives me the opportunity to have a fair share of some of the challenges and disagreement on idea and policy issues that may arise among stakeholders and researchers. From these processes, I have also acquired skills and methods that can be used in getting past these challenges. This has left me with the feeling of optimism that I will have a wonderful learning experience that will nurture me for the rest of my study and stay at the school of public health where my lecturers and professors now sit and confidently watch me practice what I have learned over the past semesters. What is also interesting about my role as a research assistant is that it has afforded me the space to work on study that is directly connected to my thesis topic "COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy" and has provided and still provides me with knowledge that will greatly provide insight on my thesis writing.

As I am aspiring to becoming a practical field epidemiologist and a quantitative researcher and develop my potential to the fullest of my ability, I am convinced that the University Of Liberia School of Public Health (ULSOPH) is the place to be where one can get the practical hands-on experience needed for career development. The different practicum and study like the current COVID-19 vaccine study can provide students at ULSOPH the opportunity to acquire those needed skills for a promising career in public health.

## **BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CAPACITY IN LIBERIA: THE LiberHetica PROJECT**

***By:- Gloria Mason-Ross, an instructor at ULSOPH and Executive Director of the NREB;  
Jemee Tegli as co-author, a staff of NREB and PREVAIL. Here she describes a  
collaborative effort to enhance research ethics capacity in Liberia***



Health priorities require a national ethical review system that is capable of protecting the welfare of research participants. With clinical research, especially from disease outbreaks, becoming a critical priority in Liberia, the need for adequate ethics infrastructure cannot be overemphasized. It is essential to ensure efficient review, approval, and oversight of research studies, as well as the protection of study participants. Therefore, development of a sustainable ethics infrastructure in Liberia is highly important, especially during public health emergencies (PHEs) wherein the country continues to experience an

unprecedented exposure to clinical research studies for reviews, evaluation, approvals and oversight, respectively. In this direction, the National Research Ethics Board of Liberia (NREB) and the Atlantic Center for Research and Evaluation Institutional Review Board (ACRE IRB), together with the European-not-for-profit organization, R-Evolution Worldwide, collaborate. "LiberHetica" was established with the goal of increasing ethics capacity and strengthening oversight for clinical trials in Liberia through European-African collaborations. To guide activities of the collaborations, the NREB and ACRE-IRB completed assessments and analyses of their respective ethics procedures and processes. Several gaps were identified with respect to application review tools and documents, standard operating procedures (SoPS), guidelines, technological platform and information management system for submission and review, and dissemination and continued staff training. As a potential next step, the project consortium is initiating exchanges with international ethical networks, working groups, and platforms to discuss appropriate resolutions.

The LiberHetica also established collaboration with the Good Clinical Practice Alliance - Europe (GCPA), a global body for the promotion and development of the highest standards for ethics and science in health-related research. The principal objective of this collaboration is to foster policy development in ethics and health-related research through evidence, dialogue, and the building of trust across sectors and stakeholders. Within this context, the LiberHetica partners participated in weekly webinars on global research ethics with world-class stakeholders aimed at strengthening ethics preparedness during the implementation of clinical trials that are conducted during PHEs, including the current CoVID-19 pandemic.

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## THE SCHOOL OF PHARMACY GRADUATES THE FIRST DOCTOR OF PHARMACY (PHARMD) CLASS. By: Associate Professor Ezekiel Fayiah Hallie, Dean/School of Pharmacy



After the approval of the curriculum by the University of Liberia in 2019 to upgrade the faculty to the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) as a precondition to implement the West African Health Organization (WAHO)-Harmonized Curriculum, the School of Pharmacy has graduated the inaugural class on March 21, 2022.

In order to train pharmacists in line with the West African Health Organization (WAHO) mandate, the School of Pharmacy presented the Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Curriculum in 2019 and was approved.

The implementation of the Curriculum was conditioned to the Faculty being converted and upgraded to that level. In 2018/2019 Academic Year, some of the faculty members enrolled at the University of Benin, Nigeria, and were graduated on February 22, 2020. To complement the full faculty conversion, the Special Conversion Program Curriculum was approved by the University in 2020. Last academic year, the University facilitated the conversion of 14 other faculty members while the regular school program is in full shrink together with the Bachelor of Pharmacy (B. Pharm) holders being enrolled.

The School's Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) program combines rigorous basic science education with extensive and varied clinical experiences so that graduates will be prepared to contribute to revolutionize the future of health care through new discoveries and innovations to improve patient lives.

Out of the fourteen (14) faculty members enrolled into the program twelve (12) successfully completed the course of study and were cleared for graduation. Those graduated with Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD) Degree include: Instructor Galimah Akoi, Assistant Professor Sampson K. P. Chea, Instructor Beyan K. Johnson, Instructor Joseph B. Kamara, Instructor Mohammed B. Kamara, Instructor David N. Sneh, Assistant Professor George F. Sorbor, Professor Hasipha C. Tarpeh, Instructor Jerry T. toe, Assistant Professor Tijli T. Tyee, Instructor Jah Cisco Weah and Instructor Joseph S. Weah. (Please insert the photo of graduates)

## STUDENTS OF TWO CLASSES OF THE SCHOOL OF PHARMACY ERECT THE GATE OF THE ENTRANCE OF THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES



It can be recalled that the gate to the entrance of the College of Health Sciences had been damaged for over five years. As a result, the College has been vulnerable to intruders and thieves for a protracted period thus causing losses of many valuable properties on the Campus. As students observed breaks into offices and properties stolen, they decided to undertake the gate project. Students of years five and three tasked one another and raised funds to recondition the gate and erect the arc over the

gate. The project cost three thousand, four hundred, eighty (\$3,480.00) United States Dollars.

Today, the College can boast of the secure property due to the secure gate built by the students of the School of Pharmacy.

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Magnitude of metabolic syndrome and its associated risk factors among adults in the Bardnersville community in Liberia (2022) **E F. Hallie**<sup>1,2</sup> P. O. Erah<sup>2</sup> E.C. Onuoha<sup>3</sup> P. S. Humphrey<sup>4,5</sup> M.T, Massaquoi<sup>6</sup> M.C .Ojiako<sup>7</sup>  
<http://arjmcs.in/index.php/arjmcs/article/view/409>

Helminths immunological activities in asthmatic patient in jos, plateau state, Nigeria (2022) D.A. Dakul<sup>1</sup> E.M. Ike<sup>1</sup> M.B. Matur<sup>1</sup> J.A. Yohanna<sup>1</sup> E.C. Onuoha<sup>2</sup> **E. F. Hallie** <sup>3</sup> M.C .Ojiakor<sup>4</sup>  
<http://arjmcs.in/index.php/arjmcs/article/view/410>

**Gray KL**, Kiazolu M, Jones J, Konstantinova A, **Zawolo JSW**, **Gray W-MH**, Walker NF, Garbo JT, Caldwell S, **Odo M**, Bhadelia N, DeMarco J, and **Skrip, L.** (2022). Liberia adherence and loss-to-follow-up in HIV and AIDS care and treatment: A retrospective cohort of adolescents and adults from 2016–2019. PLOS Glob Public Health 2(3): e0000198. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pgph.0000198>

**Sinnatwah, J.D., Kenneh, H., Coker, A.A., Harmon-Gray, W., Zankah, J.,** Day, L., Hubbell, E., Murphy, M., Izzo, M., Kong, D., Sylwester, P., Long, Q., Bertozzi, E., and **Skrip, L.** (2022). Participatory design and process testing to optimize utility, usability, and acceptability of a mobile game for promoting evidence-driven public health decision-making in resource-constrained settings. *Frontiers in Digital Health*. 3:788557. doi: 10.3389/fdgth.2021.788557

**Koko, V.S.,** Warsame, M., Vonhm, B. et al. Artesunate–amodiaquine and artemether–lumefantrine for the treatment of uncomplicated falciparum malaria in Liberia: in vivo efficacy and frequency of molecular markers. *Malar J* 21, 134 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12936-022-04140-7>