

2015-16 SHEELA BASRUR CENTRE

A Year in Review



Shaping the future of public health

Reflecting on the activities of the Sheela Basrur Centre over the past year, we are reminded of the impact and reach of the Centre's programs.

Our programs are vital to the renewal of the public health sector, offering public health professionals and students valuable opportunities that would otherwise not exist. In 2015-2016, we continued to offer our annual suite of Sheela Basrur Centre (SBC) programs and activities focused on communications and leadership development for public health professionals and students.

Our new relationship with the Sherwin family was the highlight for the Centre this past year. Their generous donation was made in honour of their late aunt, Alice Sherwin, a former public health nurse at the Middlesex-London Health Unit. Their contribution to the SBC student programs will empower the next generation of public health experts, offering invaluable learning experiences for students.

As a tribute to Alice Sherwin, we've chronicled some key moments in her life and in her career as a public health nurse (read the article on page 4).

Part of our focus over the next year will be fostering and stewarding relationships with our donors and sponsors. It is these connections with families, individuals, and organizations that make SBC what it is today, and what it will be in the future. All of our donors have stories. It is these stories that drive the Centre, and ultimately affect change within the public health sector.

As we continue to move forward increasing our engagement with our stakeholders, our goal is to raise awareness around the Centre, ensure the sustainability of its awards and programs, so we continue to carry on Dr. Basrur's legacy.



Sheela Basrur Centre

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Advanced Media Training Workshop

November 2016

Student Travel Bursary

Call for Applicants
January 2017

Sheela Basrur Symposium
March 2017

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Transforming the public health dialogue



Dr. Alejandro Jadad at the 2016 SBC Symposium
Photo credits: Michelle Yee

“What is optimal health?
Can we promote good health
rather than fix bad health?”

— Dr. Alejandro Jadad

These were some of the provocative questions asked at the eighth annual Sheela Basrur Symposium in April 2016 by this year’s lecturer, Dr. Alejandro Jadad. Dr. Jadad is a physician, educator, researcher, entrepreneur, and public advocate.

As the Director of the Institute of Global Health Equity & Innovation at the University of Toronto, Dr. Jadad grapples with the complex issues of wellness, health and illness. In his lecture, “Bringing Back Health and Public into Public Health”, Dr. Jadad successfully created a dynamic forum for public health professionals to express their thoughts and ideas on the concept of public health.

Dr. Jadad engaged and lead an his audience of public health professionals like a conductor at the helm of an orchestra. Generating dialogue and open discussion through live polling and

social media, Dr. Jadad created a unique and collective public health “happening”. The state of public health was certainly top of mind for everyone who attended this year’s symposium.

His multi-platform presentation generated thought-provoking online dialogue, as Dr. Jadad challenged people to think about public health in a broader context. Tackling issues such as social determinants of health, health and gender equity, employment and economics, Dr. Jadad confronted our perspective on how we view health. “When we focus on the diseases, we are contributing to the problem instead of celebrating health”, said Dr. Jadad.

Dr. Jadad’s innovative approach demonstrated excellence in communications and leadership in public health practice. His lecture honoured the memory of Dr. Sheela Basrur, highlighting her skills in both arenas.



When we focus on the diseases, we are contributing to the problem instead of celebrating health.”

— Dr. Alejandro Jadad



Creating a public health legacy

The Sherwin family's generous donation to SBC's student programs honours their late aunt, Alice Sherwin.

Alice was a public health nurse in Ontario. Her legacy and the Sherwin family gift help foster the next generation of public health leaders.

As a tribute, SBC takes a look into the life and career of Alice Sherwin to uncover the legacy that she created for public health nursing in Ontario.

With a successful career in nursing spanning 35 years, Alice Sherwin dedicated much of her work to advancing public health in the Middlesex-London region. Born during a time of economic crisis, Alice came into the world at the start of the great depression in 1929. Coming from a family of four children in Cobourg, Ontario provided opportunities for Alice to exert her independent spirit, even at a young age. It was quite well known within the Sherwin family that her two older brothers, who were tasked with getting Alice to school safely, often abandoned her and left her to her own devices. Despite this, she always seemed to manage to get to school and back home safely. This self-reliance would serve Alice well later in life and throughout her career.

At a young age, Alice watched her mother (a former nurse from Chicago) nurture and care for her brother, who was stricken with polio in childhood. Witnessing her mother's nursing abilities in those early days was an inspiration in Alice's decision to embark on her own career in nursing. Alice graduated from the Toronto General Hospital School of Nursing in 1951.

Alice entered the workforce at a time when women had few options. During this period, occupations for women were



We wanted to thank Aunt Alice for her legacy to us, her nieces and nephews, by honouring her in a way that reflected her life's work."

— Jay Sherwin, nephew

predominately limited to nursing, teaching, or secretarial. Alice's first job in nursing was at Toronto General Hospital, and after some time in the hospital setting she began looking for another challenge. Thinking that opportunities in public health nursing may broaden her skillset and provide a more dynamic environment, Alice completed her certificate in Public Health Nursing at the University of Toronto in 1958.

She began her career as a public health nurse at Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health before moving onto the Middlesex-London Health Unit in 1963, where she stayed until her retirement.

When faced with difficulties, Alice rose to challenges and met them head on. She progressed to leadership roles at the health unit, pausing in mid-career to attend Dalhousie University in 1973 to obtain her Nursing Services Administration degree so she could be appointed Nursing Supervisor. As the Nursing Supervisor in the Middlesex-London Health Unit, Alice was responsible for hospital liaisons and Senior, Volunteer, Sexually Transmitted Disease and Communi-

cable Diseases programs. Her ability for implementing an idea and seeing it through was one of Alice's greatest strengths. Best laid plans and ideas would fall to the ground without Alice's determination and talent for putting these ideas and visions into practice.





“ Alice had great people skills. She handpicked each and every nurse at the health unit right up to her retirement.”

— Dr. Nancy Tuttle, former Associate Medical Officer of Health, Middlesex-London Health Unit

Leading the Family Planning Clinic at the Middlesex-London Health Unit for several years allowed Alice to showcase her ability to implement and put concepts into action. The health unit was looking for new ways to get vital information to the public using local media. Alice was able to carry out this idea by taking advantage of the media opportunities available to her at the time. Being a strong communicator, Alice was at ease in front of the camera when she was featured on a local London cable television show answering questions and providing information about the clinic.

Alice took pride in developing relationships, which was a significant part of her job. Her knack for connecting with people enabled her to hire high quality applicants. As the demand for public health nurses increased, Alice found herself fully immersed in the hiring process within her new role.

In 1985, with the support of her friend and colleague, former Associate Medical Officer of Health Dr. Nancy Tuttle, she was appointed Assistant Director of Nursing.



Right: A young Alice Sherwin early in her nursing career.

Below: Alice Sherwin at her retirement party in 1992.



Photos courtesy of the Sherwin family.

After retiring from the Middlesex-London Health Unit in 1992, Alice spent the next chapter of her life doing what she loved – travel. Her adventurous spirit sent her on European excursions in the rivers and canals of France, the Danube, the Channel Islands, Brittany, Normandy, England, Scotland, and Wales. She spent winters in Arizona and summers in Muskoka with her former colleague and friend, Nancy Tuttle.

Alice's indomitable spirit and determination drove her to never back down from a challenge. It was Alice's resolve and ability to clear hurdles to advance her career that undoubtedly paved the way for those generations of public health nurses who came after her.

A special thanks to the Sherwin family for their generous donation to the SBC student programs.

We would also like to acknowledge the Sherwins and Dr. Nancy Tuttle for contributing to this article.

Theory into practice:

Applying communications strategies to public health issues

The Sheela Basrur Centre's Don Low Communications Fellowship honours Dr. Low, former microbiologist-in-chief at Mount Sinai Hospital and medical director of the Public Health Ontario Laboratories. The fellowship seeks to empower the next generation of public health professionals to advance their communications skills, equipping them with the tools necessary to become effective leaders and spokespersons.

Atul Jain and Angela Newman received the 2015 Don Low Communications Fellowship. Their commitment and dedication to public health embodies the spirit and values of the great leader in public health communications, Dr. Donald Low.



Atul Jain has worked as the manager of Inspection Services at the Peterborough County-City Health Unit for the past four years. He is also the president of the Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario (ASPHIO). Having extensive public health knowledge and experience has benefitted his work in the Peterborough County-City Health Unit where he is frequently called upon to act as a media spokesperson.

Through the fellowship, Atul attended the Harvard School of Public Health's *Applied Risk Communication for the 21st Century* course in September 2015.



Angela Newman is a public health manager at the Grey Bruce Public Health Unit. She is responsible for a diverse portfolio that includes food safety, vector borne disease, and tobacco prevention and enforcement. With over 12 years of experience in public health, Angela frequently engages with stakeholders, partners, and various levels of government through Grey Bruce's many programs.

For Angela's fellowship she participated in the Ontario Hospital Association's *Essentials of Communications* workshop in June 2016.

SBC had an opportunity to interview Atul and Angela about what they took away from their fellowship experiences.

Fellows receive training to enhance their ability to communicate effectively, create engaging stakeholder relations strategies, and craft messages for journalists, politicians, government officials and the general public.

SBC: How has the fellowship enhanced your knowledge of communications?

AJ: It has enhanced my knowledge of risk communications in that it has reminded me that one should always be truthful, even if all the information isn't available. I have also become more aware of the pitfalls one can fall into when doing risk communications, in addition to the pros and cons of using social media. I learned that most failures in risk communication are a result of improper communication.

AN: Several concepts were introduced for developing personal effectiveness in working with others. The most striking of these concepts were the self-reflection exercises on emotional intelligence and personality behavioural traits. Success in the workplace and the ability to influence others is dependent upon the way you interact with others and manage relationships. Understanding the difference in personality behavioural traits helps to identify the differences between people, and how best to communicate and interact with them.

“ Most failures in risk communication are a result of improper communication.”

— Atul Jain

SBC: What aspects of the course resonated with you the most?

AJ: The diversity of the people and the lecturers from North America and even in the world. We were fortunate enough to have communication experts in attendance from African countries who were dealing with the Ebola virus outbreak.

AN: Traditionally, authority and positional power were seen as the drivers for getting work done. However, there are many ways to increase your effectiveness to get work accomplished. The course taught me how to become more effective in learning to influence others, getting their support, and leveraging my personal power.

SBC: Do you use communications strategies within your current role?

AJ: I incorporate various media relations strategies in many areas of public health. I've spoken to the media about current issues like Lyme disease, Hepatitis A and Listeriosis outbreaks, blue-green algae and climate change.

AN: Within my current role, I use a variety of communication strategies related to stakeholder engagement, risk communication, and internal communications. External communications include news releases, social media, and interviews to update the general public on new provincial legislation, advocacy for healthy public policy to municipal leaders, and general protection and safety messages to the public. Internal public health unit communication strategies include reports and presentations to the Board of Health on program accomplishments and challenges, and informing staff on ministry requirements and organizational changes.

“ Developing workplace relationships means understanding others and how they communicate.”

— Angela Newman

SBC: How will you be able to apply what you have learned through the fellowship in your current position in the health unit?

AJ: The knowledge I acquired from this fellowship will assist me in my day-to-day work in many ways. I have gained skills and learned techniques that have helped me to become more comfortable engaging with the media (e.g., conventional and social) and with the public.

AN: The self-reflection assessments geared to understanding personality behavioural traits will be easily incorporated into my day-to-day work at the health unit. Developing workplace relationships means understanding others and how they communicate. The course taught me how to identify communication styles that are different from my own and how to apply strategies that would lead to successful communication outcomes.

We congratulate Atul and Angela, our 2015 Don Low Communications Fellowship recipients.

Putting a global lens on public health issues

University of Toronto students Katherine Nunes and Annie Liang were selected as the 2015 Student Travel Bursary recipients. Katherine, a nursing student, and Annie, a Master of Public Health student, embarked on adventures to India and Africa last year. Although the focus of these placements were very different, both experiences proved to be life-changing for the students, offering global public health perspectives to Katherine and Annie.



Above and below: Katherine Nunes with the local children and women in India.



Katherine Nunes

As part of completing her bachelor of nursing degree from the University of Toronto, Katherine Nunes completed a four week practicum in India during the summer of 2015. Katherine's placement sought to facilitate a deeper understanding of issues in global health, the social determinants of health, and the delivery of primary health care. The practicum program was offered in partnership with the Catholic Health Association of India (CHAI), a non-governmental organization with a network of over 3,400 member institutions, delivering health care across the country.

Through her practicum, Katherine observed the differences between primary health care delivery in rural and urban populations. In the rural community of Borabanda, India, Katherine noted how various advantages within this community - more space, less air pollution, and less garbage (than urban centres), provided opportunities for people to grow their own food. Borabanda's rural community also suffered from a lack of resources, high maternal and infant morbidity (due to lack of



I am really inspired by the ingenuity and motivation behind the many public health endeavours I witnessed in India, and I have gained a new appreciation for the access to resources we have in Canada.”

— Katherine Nunes

delivery facilities and a tradition of home births), unemployment, and lack of education around health issues and health maintenance strategies.

The urban portion of Katherine's rotation took place in various neighbourhoods and districts of Hyderabad. Katherine noted that in the urban settings, home visits were less prevalent, and more outpatient clinics were implemented. She observed a high level of community engagement, which worked

well in the population dense urban centres where government health facilities were more numerous and closer to one another, making teamwork and coordination possible for large public health activities.

The four week course was a life-changing experience for Katherine, allowing her to gain a deeper appreciation for public health, nursing, and global collaboration.

Annie Liang

As part of her Master of Public Health (Epidemiology – Global Health Emphasis) at the University of Toronto, Annie Liang undertook an eight month practicum placement with the Orphaned and Separated Children's Assessment Related (OSCAR) to their Health and Well-Being study. This ten-year longitudinal study is affiliated with the Moi Teaching and Referral Hospital in Eldoret, Kenya.

The OSCAR study follows a cohort of orphaned and separated children situated in households, Charitable Children's Institutions, and the streets, in the Uasin Gishu County of western Kenya. OSCAR seeks to improve the health and well-being of orphaned and separated children by attempting to better understand the effects of different domestic care environments through standardized site assessments, annual medical examinations and psychosocial assessments.

Annie's work investigated how government cash transfer programs to households caring for orphaned and vulnerable children (OVCs) affect the psychological well-being of this vulnerable population. Annie travelled to Kenya to implement and monitor the data collection aspect of the research. Her study design included the recruitment of 60 orphaned adolescents and 30 caregivers for in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted with individuals from households receiving and households not receiving governmental cash



transfers. This field placement provided Annie with an intimate view into the everyday lives and struggles of the urban and rural poor.

This placement was a transformative experience for Annie, emphasizing the importance of community engagement in program implementation and systems-based approaches when tackling public health challenges. Particularly moved by the harrowing stories told by study participants of their poverty, stigmatization, and resilience, Annie observed first-hand the impact of how social determinants of health and inequalities can accumulate over the course of lifetime. The most poignant moment of Annie's practicum was the incredible generosity and strength of the Kenyans who had so little yet welcomed her into their homes.



My fieldwork practicum in Kenya allowed me to explore advocacy opportunities in a region that I would not otherwise have been able to explore.”

— Annie Liang

Left and above: Annie Liang with community health workers in Kenya.

Congratulations to Katherine and Annie on the completion of their work abroad. These opportunities provide valuable insight on some of the public health challenges faced by developing communities. Special thanks to both students for contributing to the article by chronicling their journeys.

Effecting change through public health communications

The Sheela Basrur Centre Communications Student Award provides students from public health and/or communication disciplines an opportunity to showcase their knowledge and creativity by developing communications strategies on critical public health issues.

Congratulations to Communications Student Award recipients **Stephanie Ko, Kaitlynn Almeida, and Kasthuri Paramalingam.**

The Queen's University Master of Public Health students were selected as the 2015 Communications Student Award (CSA) recipients for their winning communications campaign, Gold for Gonorrhoea.

This year's CSA challenge called for students to submit their ideas for increasing physician awareness about the recommended treatment for gonorrhoea. The winning campaign provided practical and multi-faceted communications strategies for raising physician awareness around the recommended treatment. The campaign focused on motivating health care providers to be leaders among their peers, while encouraging physician adherence to Ontario's gonorrhoea treatment guidelines.

The student trio presented their winning campaign to an audience of public health professionals at the Infectious Disease Workshop in Toronto in October 2015.

We congratulate the team of Queen's University students on their winning campaign. Their ideas and creativity generated much-needed dialogue on this critical public health issue.



SBC 2015 Communications Student Award winners (from left to right): Stephanie Ko, Kasthuri Paramalingam and Kaitlynn Almeida.

“Effective public health communication is crucial for enabling community members to make informed health decisions, and for supporting public health professionals as they implement practices to improve population health.”

— Kaitlynn Almeida, 2015 Communications Student Award recipient

Supporting Public Health in Ontario

As the Sheela Basrur Centre (SBC) enters its eighth year, renewal and sustainability will become a major priority.



Much of the improvement of life expectancy over the past century is due to public health measures.”

— Dr. Sheela Basrur

Make an online donation to SBC

1. Click the button below to access the Sheela Basrur Centre fund web page (hosted by the Toronto Foundation).
2. Click on the “Donate to Fund” button.
3. Complete the donation form and click on the “Contribute” button.

[Donate to the Sheela Basrur Centre](#)

Make a donation to SBC by telephone/mail

Please contact:

Tory Robertson

Donor Relations Officer
Toronto Foundation

33 Bloor Street East, Suite 1603 Toronto
ON M4W 3H1

Tel: 416-921-2035 ext. 211

More information about donating to the Centre and our partnership with the Toronto Foundation can be found on the [SBC website](#).

Over the past several years, funding from our generous partners has helped create strong voices and leaders for change, strengthening the public health sector.

To continue towards our vision and honouring the legacy of Dr. Basrur, we need generous supporters like you to contribute to the Centre to keep our programs operational.

Our Work

Our work is making significant and long lasting impacts to improving public health and health services in Ontario. This funding will help us build upon and maintain the successful public health development programs offered by the Sheela Basrur Centre.

Our Programs

Our programs are essential to the viability of public health in Ontario. As public health issues continue to make headlines, there is an increasing need for public health professionals to communicate effectively and in a way that will resonate with the media and general public. Your donation will help ensure that when the next public health crisis hits our province we will be ready to face it head-on.

Your Support

By supporting the Sheela Basrur Centre you are investing not only in our programs that will sustain the sector but also in the people. We are equipping professionals with the skills and resources to effectively manage strategic communications with the public, stakeholders, and the media. These individuals will be essential to providing information, knowledge and advice to navigate Ontario through the next public health crisis.

Our Partnership

Our partnership with the [Toronto Foundation](#) means that your contributions are tax-deductible. The Sheela Basrur Centre receives the donated funds, and the Toronto Foundation issues tax receipts on our behalf.

The Toronto Foundation is a registered, public, non-profit organization created for and by the people of Toronto.

Witnessing the impact of your donation



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The generous contribution by the Sherwin family this year provided an opportunity for them to witness first hand the impact and reach of our programs. You too can donate to a specific SBC program or activity.

These programs provide valuable experiences and training for public health professionals and students, promoting renewal within the sector and shaping the next generation of public health experts.

For more information about donating to a specific SBC program or sponsorship opportunities please contact us at SBC@oahpp.ca.

WE GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGE OUR SPONSORS

Founding Partners

The Sheela Basrur Centre gratefully acknowledges the generous support of our five founding partners whose five-year commitment to the Centre enabled its establishment and development.



Don Low Communications Fellowship Founder

The Sheela Basrur Centre would like to thank and recognize Pfizer for its contribution to establishing the Don Low Communications Fellowship.



Sheela Basrur Centre Event Partners

The Sheela Basrur Centre is grateful to our event partners who support the Centre's events throughout the year.

