4 CAIVIPUS

EWB-IIT brings U-Chicago GlobeMed to campus

campus@technewsiit.com

Utsav Gandhi CAMPUS EDITOR

As part of social justice month commemoration, EWB-IIT invited fellow student leaders from the University of Chicago's GlobeMed chapter to speak about their efforts with tuberculosis education and a unique, sustainable grassroots partnership with ASPAT; a nonprofit based in Peru working to achieve the same goal.

Presenters Cindy and Ethel (the internal co-Presidents of the chapter) spoke about a student's approach to Global Health problems plaguing our world today. They mentioned that this model of sustainable partnership is similar to EWB's and that collaboration between a predominantly engineering student group and another pre-medicine or global health group could work wonders in the fight towards achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Tuberculosis (TB) was the leading cause of death 100 years ago, though antibiotics have today helped to eradicate in the US, whereas the problem still persists outside. A third of the world's population is still affected by the disease in their lifetime and failures to infiltrate medicines into the developing world have largely remained difficult. Archbishop Desmond Tutu once said, "TB is the child of poverty, but also its parent and provider." Keeping this as their motto, GlobeMed U-

Chicago ties in their vision for a socially just world into their work in eradicating the cycle of disease and poverty.

The presenters shared two stories from GlobeMed UChicago's recent history: one was about Laura (name changed), a student at U-Chicago, who caught TB while on a visit to Peru. She was prescribed a one-year mandatory drug regiment while trying to reenter the USA, and there were no other side effects. Her biggest grouse today is that the vaccines and medications prevent her from consuming alcohol. The second story was about Raul, who lives in a poor locality of Peru; is aged 29, has 3 children, and is currently undergoing symptoms for the same disease which struck Laura, simply because he doesn't have access to vaccinations and medications in Peru. The few medications available are too expensive, and he has been rendered the sole breadwinner of family since his wife left him after he was diagnosed.

These two stories show the glaring social justice disparities: a life turned around completely by a disease and a life relatively unchanged, simply because of the varied levels of access. This is no longer a matter of disease, but a matter of justice and power. "There will be no justice without a social movement," says Joia Mukherjee from the Harvard School of Global Health. There are imbalances in the dynamics of power between the poor and the rich, and the people must work together with the government to end these disparities.

Addressing the MDGs has become even more crucial than before: touching areas like sanitation, basic health education, income generation, grassroots partnerships, as well as developing student leaders in global health and other developmental initiatives so as to sustain the movement.

The U-Chicago GlobeMed chapter information is a roster of 43 active members, and the chapter itself was founded in winter 2010. There is a strong focus on leadership and effective communication in keeping every member of the organization on the same page.

Then there was the case of Melecio: a budding pilot, who developed TB after high school. The glaring symptoms meant that he couldn't attend university, and had to undergo lung surgery. Not eligible to become a pilot, he instead chose to found ASPAT, the grassroots organization which is now working with U-Chicago GlobeMed (including weekly Skype calls). The organization is very active in Peru and Melecio was recently appointed to the regional committee in the Central American WHO branch. The GlobeMed chapter helps in jewelry making seminars and supplying nutrition baskets - with the aim of self-empowerment, structural leadership, and an entrepreneurship-training program.

The chapter said that challenges remain. It can be difficult to enforce mutual responsibility, and this is where partnerships come in to magnify our abilities. Working on getting the entire chapter onto the same page

and inter-chapter learning means continuous opportunities for growth. Current opportunities identified are the Grassroots Outside Work (GROW) internship every summer spending time with ASPAT, attending meetings with the community and local government to help pass legislation regarding TB.

The chapter is currently working on health clinics that don't have Internet access (so, by extension, an effective way of tracking inventory.) The chapter is now building a mobile phone inventory program and is working with the government to implement it. The chapter is also currently featured on the Globe-Med national website! (http://globemed.org/ impact/university-of-chicago/)

EWB-IIT and the Engineering Themes need to be credited for organizing an event of such deep reflection and collaborative learning with student leaders from neighboring universities.

There are many lessons to be learned from the work of our peers, and students working united to bring about positive change can really make an impact if they work collaboratively.

Inspired by EWB's efforts and want to join in the fight? They will be hosting a one day community service effort this coming Saturday, March 2nd, at Habitat for Humanity's Chicagoland chapter in Elgin, IL. Transportation will be provided and the trip will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact ewb_group@iit. edu to sign up or for more information.



What's Next?

Will you help our rate by recycling this week?



