

NTSAD Gottlieb Memorial Scholarships Essay

Joshua L. Greenberg

October 1, 2009

Over the past couple of years, I have experienced an ever intensifying interest in global health inequalities and human rights. In November of 2007, I conceived of the idea for Progressive Health Partnership (PHP, www.proghealth.org), a social justice organization that would promote solidarity with the global poor in building community-based programs to better deliver healthcare and other basic services. PHP became a fully functional organization on the Duke campus in October of 2008; and this past summer, we had the opportunity to work for nine weeks in Southwestern Uganda, where we had established a partnership with Mayanja Memorial Hospital Foundation (MMHF), a local non-governmental organization that conducts community outreach programs in impoverished rural areas. While in Uganda, we worked with MMHF to implement a safe motherhood project at four government health centers, providing prenatal services to over 1600 women. Concurrently, we conducted needs assessment work, such as focus group discussions and a baseline survey, to lay the foundation for a long-term project in the region.

My experience in Uganda validated my strong interests, to say the least. One can travel to a location such as Uganda, expecting to see utter despair and destitution – but such an expectation would be shortsighted and discrediting. Immensely severe problems certainly do exist, and each day of life is a struggle for far too many people. When pregnant women arrived for services at the health centers where we worked, some of them had walked between 5 and 10 kilometers in the heat. During most other times of the year – when community members only have the services of the stripped-down government-run centers – drug shortages are never-ending. And that is just to describe a couple of the problems, all of which I believe we must

new and successful research on Canavan. Among other milestones, their work contributed to the development of prenatal detection for Canavan, first tested on my mother's pregnancy with me.

In some senses, it does not surprise me that my parents undertook these remarkable initiatives; after all, they simply demonstrated the same care and hope for their children and others as the Ugandan women showed me this past summer. My family also recognized similar hope and strength in Jonathan and Amy themselves. Although they may have been severely limited for most of their lives, they still laughed and smiled and shined. It is this hope and strength which has continued to influence me to this day, crafting my attitudes and inspiring my actions. Indeed, in the field of health inequalities and human rights, it would be especially challenging if I did not approach each day with great hope for the future and in recognition of the strengths of the people I serve. And so today I continue to carry this torch, this legacy, of hope and strength in all my current and future endeavors.