



**ACCTMTH**  
**Clinical Group**  
AMERICAN COMMITTEE  
ON CLINICAL TROPICAL MEDICINE  
AND TRAVELERS' HEALTH

# Newsletter

ISSUE 01

2023

## About Us

The American Committee on Clinical Tropical Medicine and Travelers' Health (ACCTMTH) is the clinical group within the American Society of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene. Our members include civilian, military and governmental experts in travelers' health, tropical infection and tropical disease.





## President's Address

Dear Clinical Group members,  
We are excited to introduce the first edition of our newsletter, written and edited by our new interns. The goal of this newsletter is to share events and updates with the whole clinical group. If you have anything you would like to share in a future issue, please reach out to our interns, Praise and Alexis (see email addresses below).

In this first issue, we would like to highlight some important news. First of all, we want to share how we are addressing concerns that many of you raised at the business meeting in Seattle regarding the relative lack of clinical content at the annual meeting. You spoke and we listened. We have worked very closely with the scientific program committee, including the clinical subgroup. We are excited to welcome back some old favorite symposia including the CDC Yellow Book update, the "What's New in the Literature" session, and Meet the Professors sessions. The number of

clinical sessions has also increased. Please take note that the more sessions you submit, the more clinical content we are likely to have, so we would love to see even more proposals submitted next year to maintain the momentum. Starting next year, there will also be a clinical tropical medicine practice track, so that when you submit clinical symposia, you can select that specific category. Those submissions will have a separate review committee that is focused on material relevant to clinicians. We are looking forward to these changes at the annual meeting.

A second key focus for us has been to involve more clinicians from low and middle income countries (LMICs) at the annual meeting. We developed a new grant to sponsor a LMIC clinician to attend the meeting and discuss cases during a Meet the Professors session. We were thrilled to have more than 60 applicants. You can read more about our fantastic first recipient later in this newsletter. Please come hear her speak during the

meeting!

A third key area of focus has been to increase tropical medicine awareness within our subgroup and beyond. You may have noticed that we have reinvigorated our Twitter account, @ACCTMTH, and are sending out more invitations to ASTMH-sponsored and other webinars. If you would like us to publicize your tropical medicine educational event, please reach out to Buffy Finn [bfinn@astmh.org](mailto:bfinn@astmh.org).

Lastly, we look forward to seeing you all at the 2023 annual meeting in Chicago! Please come by to say hello at our table, during the business meeting, and join in the fun at trivia night.

Warm regards,  
**Natasha Hochberg**  
(Clinical Group President, on behalf of the council)

## Interns

This year, we hired two part-time interns to help us accomplish some of the goals of the Clinical Group.



**Alexis Elliott**

Hello! My name is Alexis Elliott and I am currently a first-year medical student at the University of California, San Diego, USA. I went to University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) for my undergraduate education where I majored in Microbiology and Spanish. At UCLA I found my passion for tropical medicine working with *T. brucei* under the mentorship of Dr. Kent Hill and Dr. Daniel Velez-Ramirez who were both very influential in my decision to study medicine. I also designed and taught a seminar for other undergraduate students on Neglected Tropical Diseases under the mentorship of Dr. Claire Panosian who inspired me to pursue tropical medicine specifically.

Currently in medical school, I am co-president of the Internal Medicine Interest Group, a student group focused on helping other medical students gain exposure to the field of internal medicine, including infectious disease. I also enjoy volunteering at clinics at the US-Mexico border, and I hope to start working with Chagas Disease patients in San Diego County. This summer I am going to Ecuador to work on data collection for the ESPINA study focusing on chronic pesticide exposure on childhood development. When I am not in class I enjoy hiking, going to the beach, and exploring southern California, especially the national parks!

I wanted to become an intern with the clinical group to help make organizations like the ASTMH more accessible to medical trainees. I am also passionate about sharing my interest in tropical medicine with my peers, many of whom are not aware of the field and all that it has to offer! So far as an intern, I have focused on reinvigorating the twitter account for tropical medicine education, organizing medical school outreach for the annual meeting, and helping create clinical group swag items for the annual meeting. I look forward to continuing work with the clinical group, and if any member has an idea for how to increase trainee engagement, please reach out to me at [a3elliott@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:a3elliott@health.ucsd.edu).



**Praise Okunlola**

I am a fifth-year student at the Faculty of Dentistry & Dental Surgery, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, on a mission to revolutionize public health. Alongside fellow medical students, I co-founded the Public Health Interest Group Africa (PHIGA), inspiring African students through engaging activities. I'm also part of Smile Builders Initiative, fighting Non-Communicable Diseases, and the Senate President of the Unibadan Association of Dental Students (UADS), being at the forefront of providing checks and balances. Beyond dentistry, I'm a Manchester United fan, analyzing and cheering for my team.

I applied to be an intern at ACCTMTH to gain invaluable insights into the field of tropical medicine and travelers' health. Assisting dedicated professionals, my co-intern and I have actively contributed to projects promoting health awareness. For instance, I have helped with reviving the Twitter account, working on symposium proposals, planning webinars, creating swag items for the annual meeting, and creating this newsletter. This experience has enhanced my communication, teamwork, and organizational skills while deepening my passion for global health. Join me on this exciting journey of making a difference in healthcare by reaching out to me at [praiseoyedepo@gmail.com](mailto:praiseoyedepo@gmail.com) if you have any suggestion on how I can do more for this field and for medical trainees as an intern.

# LMIC Clinician Travel Award

This travel award to attend the ASTMH Annual Meeting, introduced in 2023, recognizes a tropical medicine physician practicing in a low and low-middle income country who has demonstrated excellent clinical and teaching skills.

## Meet the winner Dr Jaya Tapadar née Chakravarty



### Tell us about yourself?

I am a Professor in the Department of Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University. I have been a researcher in the field of Infectious disease focusing on leishmaniasis and HIV for over 15 years with more than 100 publications with 5712 citations. I am a National trainer for HIV, tuberculosis, visceral leishmaniasis, viral hepatitis and Public Health Emergency.

I have been the Head, Department of Medicine between 2018-2021, Nodal Officer of Covid Level 3 facility of BHU, Chairperson of COVID associated Fungal study group and am currently the Professor In-charge, Division of Infectious Disease and Program Director, Centre of Excellence in HIV care.

### How do you feel about being the first recipient of this award

It is a great honour for me and my Institution to be the first recipient of 2023 ACCTMTH LMIC Clinician Travel Award.

### What are your expectations at the conference in October?

This conference will undoubtedly provide an excellent opportunity for me to interact with global experts in the field of tropical Medicine which will enrich my knowledge, help in developing newer collaborations and improve patient care in my Institution.

## Other Awards

### Martin S. Wolfe Mentoring Award 2022 Recipient

**Michele Barry**  
Stanford University

### ACCTMTH Clinical Research Award 2022 Recipients

#### 1st place

Kathryn Radulovacki

#### 2nd place

Karen Blake Jacobson

#### 3rd place

Mohammed Sohaib Asghar

# Events and Webinars

Part of our mission is to promote awareness by developing webinars and events for our members and promoting external events that may be of interest. Here are a few.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE

# Chagas Disease Webinar

**April 18, 2023**

Recorded webinar available at <https://gotropmed.astmh.org/> for ASTMH members

### Speakers

Nuria Cortes, Alba Antequera  
Gimena Rojas

Our student trainee leadership group, led by Laia Vasquez developed a webinar on Chagas disease and invited speakers from around the world. This webinar compared the clinical presentation and management of Chagas disease in endemic and non-endemic areas, and provided expert discussion on current advances and challenges in diagnostics, treatment, and the discovery of biomarkers.

Many challenges remain regarding *T. cruzi* infection diagnostics. More practical algorithms should be used to provide point-of-care diagnostics. In recent years, isothermal amplification methods such as the LAMP technique have been developed for the diagnosis of the acute phase of the infection. For the serological detection of *T. cruzi*-specific IgGs, rapid diagnostic tests are also being tested in endemic areas.

We are still far from having a licensed test for the early assessment of treatment efficacy or Chagas disease progression. Many molecules, parasite- and host-derived, have been evaluated so far. In the last few years, new candidates have emerged, such as extracellular vesicles.

*Stay tuned for updates on upcoming webinars on Mycetoma and Ameloblastoma in June and September respectively.*

## WORLD CHAGAS DISEASE DAY 2023

UCLA's Division of Infectious Diseases and DGSOM's Global Health Program hosted an event on [Thursday, April 13 for World Chagas Day](#).

The event showcased Daisy Hernandez's book to highlight the power of storytelling and open up the discussion around Chagas Disease among medical professionals so they can be better prepared to treat this

disease, which ties back to WHO's theme for World Chagas Disease Day 2023, "Time to integrate Chagas Disease into primary care".

This one-hour event involved a panel with 4 participants:

- 01.** Daisy Hernandez (author of "The Kissing Bug--A True Story of a Family, an Insect, and Nation's Neglect of a Deadly Disease")
- 02.** Dr. Judy Currier (Chief of UCLA ID

Division)

**03.** Dr. Claire Panosian (UCLA ID Division Faculty Member and host of the event)

**04.** Dr. Sheba Meymandi (UCLA cardiologist)

To watch, visit:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzloPM8ww0>



## From Africa to the Americas

**Dr. Frank Richards Jr.** on the Fight to End River Blindness.

The School of Public Health's Black History Month keynote lecturer gives perspective on the historical roots of river blindness in America and the Carter Center's eradication efforts.

<https://brownpublichealthmagazine.org/2023/02/frank-richards/>



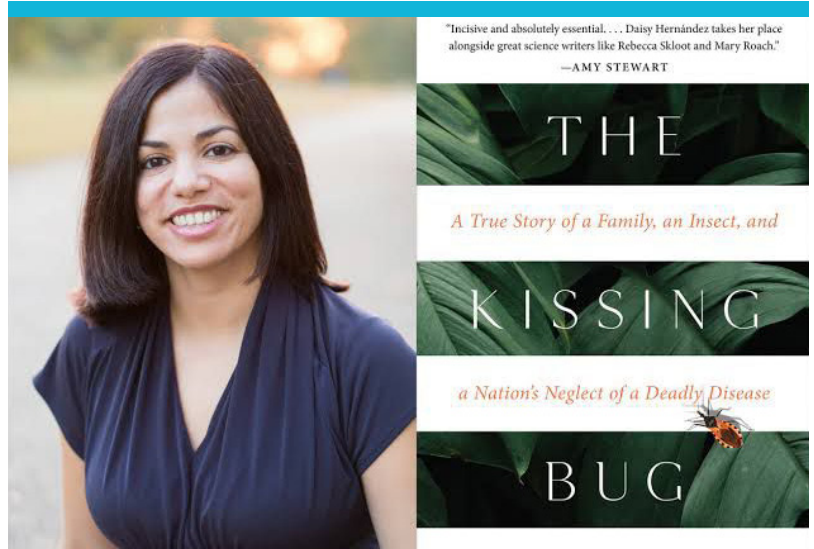
## Reader's Corner

Here we showcase books with a tropical medicine focus. Please let us know if you have any recommendations for future newsletters.

### The Kissing Bug

*A true story of a family, an insect, and a nation's neglect of a deadly disease.*

**Daisy Hernández** is the author of *The Kissing Bug: A True Story of a Family, an Insect, and a Nation's Neglect of a Deadly Disease* (Tin House, 2021), which won the PEN/Jean Stein Book Award and was selected as an inaugural title for the National Book Foundation's Science + Literature Program. The book was named a top 10 nonfiction book of 2021 by Time magazine and was a finalist for the New American Voices Award. She has spoken about the subject of her book—neglected disease and racial disparities in healthcare—on MSNBC, and at the Carter Center and the Pan American Health Organization.



## TropMed On Your Screen

### Accidental Host

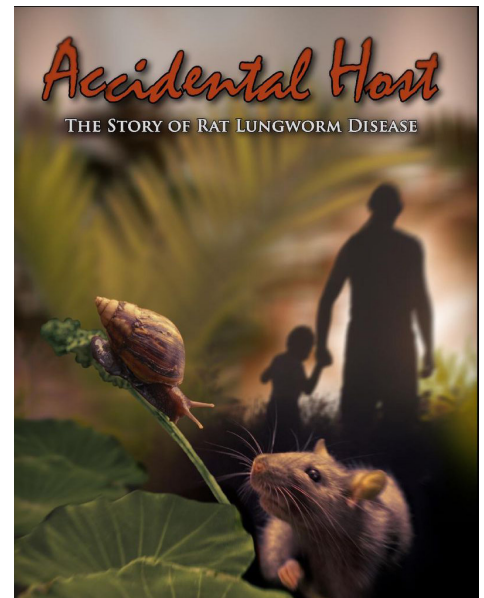
*"The Story of Rat Lungworm Disease" Now Available on PBS Passport*

Long ago, when visiting Taiwan and meeting patients with neuroangiostrongyliasis, ASTMH Past-President Claire Panosian Dunavan considered the parasitic disease a curiosity... a strange, foodborne, brain-invading blight found solely in Asia and certain Pacific Islands. Forty years later, rat lungworm is thriving in tropical areas of 5 continents and has also entered Europe. In Hawaii, residents and tourists have contracted severe, even life-threatening infections. Home-grown cases are also occurring in the southeastern U.S.

Nonetheless, human infections due to *A. cantonensis* are still unknown to most at-risk people, not to mention their doctors.

These are just some of the reasons why Claire and her filmmaker-husband Patrick decided to produce a documentary now airing on PBS stations around the country. Anyone who supports PBS can access the 53-min film by searching for "Accidental Host" on their PBS Passport app. Finally, if an ACCTMTH member would like to mount a special screening of the film at their hospital, university or medical school, they should contact Claire directly at [cpanosian@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:cpanosian@mednet.ucla.edu)

To watch a trailer or learn more about "Accidental Host" and its filmmakers, patients and key advisors (the latter list includes long-time ASTMH members Larry Ash and Vernon Ansdell; Univ of HI malacologist Robert Cowie; and Stephen Ostroff, a public health expert previously with CDC and FDA).



please visit [www.ratlungwormfilm.com](http://www.ratlungwormfilm.com)

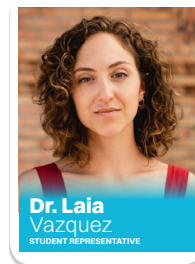
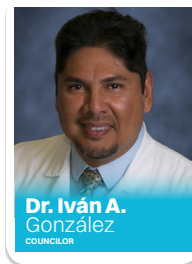
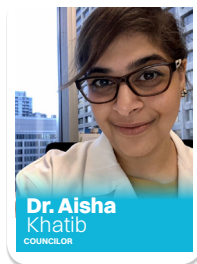
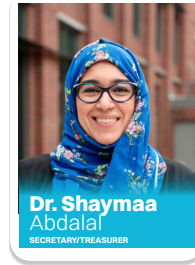


### Claire Panosian Dunavan

MD, DTM&H (London), FIDSA, FASTMH, WGAwest Past-President, American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene.

# Clinical Group Leaders

Here is a brief introduction to the Clinical Group Council. Feel free to reach out with questions or suggestions. We look forward to the upcoming elections for the new leadership. Please consider running in the future so you can contribute to promoting clinical tropical medicine.



**Dr. Natasha Hochberg** is the current president of the clinical group. She is Director, Global Health Translational Medicine at Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research and Volunteer Associate Professor at Boston University. She sees patients at Boston Medical Center where she served as the Director of Tropical Medicine and the Infectious Diseases Fellowship Program Director.

**Dr. Kyle Petersen**, the Jay Sanford Chair in Tropical Medicine at the Uniformed Services University, has a diverse background in infectious diseases. As a Navy veteran, he has experience in diving and hyperbaric medicine, served as a travel clinic director, and worked as an Infectious Disease consultant. Dr. Petersen is board certified in Internal Medicine & Infectious Diseases and has authored numerous manuscripts in the field. His interests include travel medicine and leptospirosis.

**Dr. Mark G. Kortepeter**, a retired U.S. Army Colonel and Vice President for Research at the Uniformed Services University, is a physician, scientist, soldier, and author with expertise in biodefense and infectious diseases. He has held senior positions in various organizations, including USAMRIID and the World Health Organization. Dr. Kortepeter is a board-certified preventive medicine and infectious diseases specialist, with numerous military awards and publications. He has also served as a consultant for Ebola and COVID-19 preparedness.

**Dr. Shaymaa Abdal**, a dedicated Public Health Physician and Scientist offering demonstrated experience in health and population-based research, infectious diseases and tropical medicine; along with

extensive experience developing virtual and in-person workshops and lectures both internationally and locally. Passionate about health equity, community program development, education, and social entrepreneurship, with a proven track record of program and research capacity building grounded in social impact, racial equity, and a commitment to the health and wellbeing of the marginalized populations. A lifelong learner and design thinker, with the desire to develop innovative and creative ways to address health disparities in scientific research to achieve future health equity.

**Dr. Aisha Khatib**, Assistant Professor of Family & Community Medicine at the University of Toronto, specializes in family and emergency medicine, infectious diseases, and travel medicine. With extensive training and certifications, she is the Clinical Director of a Travel Medicine clinic and holds leadership roles in various professional organizations such as CATMAT, an advisory board to the Public Health Agency of Canada. Her research explores air travel safety during the pandemic and the intersection of climate change and travel.

**Dr. Iván A. González** is an Associate Professor of Clinical Pediatrics specializing in Pediatric Infectious Diseases at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He is also a Pediatric Infectious Diseases Transplant Liaison at the Miami Transplant Institute. Dr. González's interests include Tropical Medicine, congenital infections, viral exposure in children, and transplant recipients. He serves as the Program Director of Pediatric Infectious Diseases Fellowship and is involved in educating pediatric residents. Dr. González received his medical

degree from Rutgers Medical School and completed his fellowship at the Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh. He has been recognized with awards for teaching and leadership, particularly in Zika education and research.

**Dr. Jill Weatherhead** is an Assistant Professor at Baylor College of Medicine and Texas Children's Hospital, specializing in Pediatric Tropical Medicine, Pediatric Infectious Diseases, and Adult Infectious Diseases. She holds multiple certifications in pediatrics, internal medicine, and infectious diseases, with a sub-specialty in tropical medicine and travelers health. Jill is the Assistant Dean and Director of the Diploma of Tropical Medicine Course at the National School of Tropical Medicine. Her clinical work includes treating patients in Adult and Pediatric Tropical Medicine Clinics. She completed her PhD in immunoparasitology and conducts research on parasite-host immune interactions and the impact of parasitic infections on chronic diseases in children, focusing on helminths and disease models.

**Dr. Laia Vázquez** is an INPhINIT Incoming La Caixa fellow at the PhD program on Medicine and Translational Research at ISGlobal and the University of Barcelona. She graduated as a physician at the University of Granada (2014), Spain. Subsequently she moved to the United States where she completed her residency in Internal Medicine at Yale School of Medicine- Bridgeport Hospital (2018), followed by a fellowship in infectious diseases at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (2020), and The Gorgas Diploma Course of Tropical Medicine held at the Alexander von Humboldt Tropical Medicine Institute in Lima (2020), Perú. She is currently the student representative of ACCTMTH.