

# GLOBAL HEALTH

Middlebury College Global Health Newsletter  
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## Greetings:

Luck, burnout, pivots, passion, and overtime: the life of a global health professional. This issue's alumni profiles feature the many twists and turns that it takes to find the right path in a field as interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral as global health. So much learning along the way!

## ALUMNI PROFILE || HANNAH BURNETT



Before the global health minor existed or had any dedicated faculty, Hannah Burnett '10 applied to study **global health as an independent scholar** (a process where students can design

their own major). She came to Middlebury with an interest in the pre-medical track but realized that her passion did not completely align with her coursework. Unsure of her next steps, Hannah consulted Professor David Napier, who used to teach medical anthropology classes at Middlebury. "I think you are interested in **social medicine**," he told Hannah.

Hannah's first application to be an independent scholar was rejected because there was no appropriate faculty resource. "It was not easy," Hannah reminisced, but her interest and dedication to learn more about global health drove her to apply again. Hannah researched curricula for similar majors at other colleges and spoke to many people for advice, noting that Professors Laurie Essig, Jessica Holmes, and Bob Cluss were very supportive. "To this day, I am still grateful for Professor Cluss. I worked with him a lot because he was the Dean of Curriculum at the time," Hannah recalled, "He really believed in me and found a way to make it work." When Hannah applied again in the middle of her junior year, she was approved to be the first independent scholar in Global Health. Her research, support, and enthusiasm for global health inspired the creation of the minor.

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"I got lucky," she laughed, discussing the difficulty of completing a major without a department. "I studied abroad in England where Professor Napier had moved to teach at the University College of London," she recalled, "I was able to take many of his medical anthropology classes, which counted towards the major." Her luck streak followed her when she returned to Middlebury: the college hired Professor Svea Closser (now at John Hokies), a medical anthropologist who was the first person to direct the global health minor. Professor Closser soon became her advisor and Hannah enrolled in her senior seminar course. "There were many foundational readings [from the class] that I still refer to today," Hannah said. Additionally, she worked with Professor Closser to conduct independent research about eradicating polio in Pakistan and assisted in data collection and analysis on Professor Closser's research of community health workers in Ethiopia.

Near the end of her senior year, Hannah conferred with many people about possible career paths. "I had never lived in or experienced a lot of the communities I was learning about," Hannah stated. "I spoke with Tracy Isham in the CCI and she was hugely influential in my understanding of the scope [of my choices]."

Liz Robinson (then in the CCI) invited Hannah to a lecture and dinner with a Middlebury alum who was coming to campus to speak about his global health work in South Africa. The speaker was Liz's former classmate David Torres (now a Professor of the Practice in global health). Torres informed Hannah about a fellowship called **Princeton in Africa** that placed new graduates in various organizations across the continent. Excitedly, Hannah applied and was

*"independent research about eradicating polio in Pakistan"*



*"research of community health workers in Ethiopia"*

(Hannah's profile continued from p. 1)

placed for one year in a non-profit Torres was working at called **mothers2mothers**.

Hannah's work focused on the curriculum and training of HIV+ mothers to be peer educators, a program that has now been adopted in nine different countries. She also worked on a comprehensive program management handbook about a training model that Kenya soon adopted for all their maternal and child health programs. She also worked on a comprehensive program management handbook about a training model that Kenya soon adopted for all their maternal and child health programs. "I loved it there, I learned so much," she said, "I learned about **pushing a program from conception to implementation, evaluating, scalability, replicability, sustainability, being culturally appropriate, and the ways governments and NGOs intersected.**" However, Hannah decided not to continue global health work abroad after her fellowship concluded. "I reflected on what it meant to be an American, a woman – a white woman doing this work in Cape Town," she said, noting that her comfortable living arrangements stood in stark contrast with those of nearby neighborhoods, which did not even have running water.

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When Hannah returned to the U.S., she applied to be a **Global Health Corps Fellow** and was placed in an organization called **Last Mile Health**. Hannah expressed her appreciation for the fellowship's emphasis on valuable skills in **fundraising, communications, and development**, as well as their co-fellow model in which domestic and international participants were paired together.

At the time, Last Mile Health was one of the non-profits that responded to the Haiti earthquake and the Ebola outbreak in Liberia, exposing Hannah to how difficult global health work could be. "I spent every day feeling like it was not enough," she commented, "It can be very emotionally taxing," which motivated her to **take a break from global health work**. Hannah explained the challenges of finding a work/life balance and noted, "It is hard to learn that in the classroom. You need to be good at **setting boundaries.**" Hannah became committed to strong self-care, explaining that global health work is focused on

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making the world happier and healthier, but doing the job hindered her own happiness and health.

For a couple of years, Hannah worked in Admissions at Simmons College and Northeastern University and, upon reflection, noted that global health work required a skill set in **finance and strategic programming** that she enjoyed and was interested in refining. In 2016, Hannah received her Master of Business Administration in Marketing and Social Entrepreneurship.

In 2015, Hannah employed her skills to **fundraise** for the University of Vermont's hospital, cancer center, and medical school. She learned a lot about the business aspect of domestic health care, patient care, and medical research.

In the beginning of this year, Hannah accepted a new job she learned about from a colleague. She is the current **Se-**



*"appreciates the value that Let's Grow Kids places on a work-life balance"*

**nior Manager of Foundation Relations and Grants** at a non-profit organization, **Let's Grow Kids**. The organization is working towards a goal of affordable and high-quality childcare for all Vermont families by 2025, with a focus on ensuring that families do not pay more than 10% of the costs. Access to childcare is a nationwide crisis and is a proven, critical intervention for adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), a crucial social determinant of health. In addition to her programmatic work with childcare providers, Hannah's policy work involves educating the public about the importance of childcare, mobilizing a call for public investment, and fundraising. Hannah notes that she is very happy in her current job and appreciates the value that Let's Grow Kids places on a work-life balance.

**"Figuring out what you do not want to do is sometimes more important,"** Hannah notes. She advises anyone who is interested in pursuing a global health career to talk to people, listen to their paths and ideas, ask for advice, and see what resonates. "It takes work [to build relationships], but it pays dividends," Hannah commented, explaining that she gained most of her experiences from networking. She is grateful for the deep sense of community and the vast network that Middlebury provides.

*Hannah Burnett welcomes any questions on her midd2midd profile.*

Students: find the global health and public health resources handbook at [go/GHHandbook](http://go/GHHandbook)

# ALUMNI PROFILE || KEVIN DONG



Kevin, a psychology major and global health minor, wanted a job that could combine his interest in psychology and health. For the past three and a half years, Kevin Dong '16 has been working as a **paralegal at the Antitrust Division of the Department of Justice (DoJ) in the Healthcare &**

**Consumer Products Section.** The Antitrust Division, in conjunction with the Federal Trade Commission, investigates possible anticompetitive conduct to preserve and encourage competition across all industries in the U.S.

The DoJ hires many paralegals who have recently completed their undergraduate degree. **“You learn everything you need to know on the job,”** Kevin said, explaining that the DoJ primarily looks for individuals who have a **strong academic background in the liberal arts and can learn quickly.**

“Every day is different,” he stated, but his main responsibilities involve **heavy research, reviewing business documents, interviewing customers and competitors, and consolidating the information in write-ups.** During depositions and trials, Kevin is tasked to organize the logistics, prepare exhibits, and contribute to briefs to be filed with the court. He has experience with **analyzing the market power and incentives of firms, examining the contractual restrictions on health insurers, and defining product markets and geographic markets in health insurance.**

One of the first cases he worked on was the merger case in which Aetna, the fourth largest health insurer, proposed to acquire Humana, the largest Medicare Advantage insurer. The DoJ sued to block the merger in July of 2016. Kevin’s work ultimately led to the product and geographic market being defined as Medicare Advantage and county, respectively. As a result, the DoJ alleged competitive harm in over 300 counties and was unswayed by

the merging companies’ proposed solution. The judge ruled in favor of the DoJ and the merger was prevented.

By the case’s conclusion, Kevin realized the wealth of knowledge he had gained about the health insurance and healthcare industries. “You learn as you work,” he reflected, **“Getting thrown onto the frontlines of a project, and practical experience in general, are absolutely essential for learning.”**

Kevin finds his time at the DoJ very rewarding because his work is meaningful and beneficial to many people. He has made many strong professional connections, a benefit of sharing meals with colleagues during work days that can last more than 12 hours.

Although Kevin did not consider the legal work of public health as a career option during his time at Middlebury, his experiences at the DoJ captivated his interest. Kevin is currently in the process of applying to graduate school for a **Master of Public Policy (MPP) with a focus on health**, stating that policy work appears like the next logical step. “Through this work, I have seen a lot

of things in healthcare that I do not necessarily like,” he explained, “I want to make industry changes.” One of his passions is changing the lack of price transparency in the healthcare industry.

He cited his broad interest in policy as a reason for pursuing a MPP instead of a Master of Public Health (MPH), “I am also interested in **nutrition and social policy.**”

Upon reflection, Kevin praised the critical writing and research skills the rigorous Middlebury academics helped him cultivate. Kevin’s advice for students interested in public health careers is to keep an **open mind**; he notes that it is okay to work at a job that may seem far afield of what you were initially thinking about. The first job may not be the dream job, he explained, but it is worthwhile if it moves you one step closer to your goals.

*Kevin Dong welcomes any questions on his midd2midd or MidNet profile.*



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# STUDENT PROFILE | MIKAYLA HYMAN



Mikayla Hyman '20 is an anthropology major, a global health minor, and is on the pre-medical studies track. Her coursework is designed around learning more about her passion, **health equity and disparities**.

"I have **experienced incredible growth and learning from Middlebury**," Mikayla said as she discussed the **quantitative, qualitative, and critical thinking skills** she has refined at Middlebury. She first applied her qualitative skills when she worked as a research assistant to Professor Svea Closser in Fall 2018. She **synthesized over 150 interviews of community health workers in Ethiopia** about the willingness of women to serve as unpaid community health workers. This work can be used to shape future community health worker programs.

In 2019, Mikayla completed a winter-term independent study with Professor Pam Berenbaum. The University of Vermont Health Network was working with the Vermont Legal Aid Society to provide legal assistance to their patients. Mikayla worked on **analyzing and synthesizing over 7,000 data points, improving data collection methods, and completing a literature review on medical legal organization partnerships**. "Medical and legal partnerships are effective, even though we cannot [always]

**"I have experienced incredible growth and learning from Middlebury."**

see the direct health outcomes," she stated, emphasizing the importance of the social determinants of health.

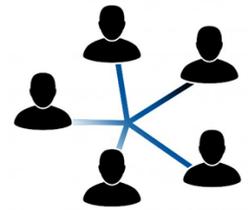
On her semester abroad in Australia, Mikayla worked with Professor Mike Armour at the Western Sydney University National Institute of Complementary Medicine. She quantitatively examined over 4,000 responses of a menstrual literacy survey and assessed the social and economic costs of endometriosis and chronic pelvic pain. Mikayla also qualitatively analyzed interviews about the effect of acupuncture on in-vitro fertilization. Her professional experience abroad exposed her to a culture that valued a work-life balance.

Her advice to anyone interested in global health is to **keep an eye out for opportunities and make your own opportunities**. "Ask for exceptions, ask to work on someone's research," Mikayla recommended, "Do projects that

interest you." She expressed gratitude for her positive experiences with cold-calling, **"There is no need to be afraid of cold-calling**. Be confident in your own abilities and clearly communicate your strengths when you cold-call," she advised. Furthermore, she is extremely grateful to her female mentors at Middlebury, namely Professors Closser, Berenbaum,

and Oxfeld. She stated that they believed in her, showed her who she could be, and how to be productive and successful while maintaining a work-life balance. Mikayla advised staying in touch with individuals you meet that are impactful to you; she enjoys catching up with her female mentors.

Mikayla Hyman welcomes any questions through her email, [mhyman@middlebury.edu](mailto:mhyman@middlebury.edu).



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## Campus & Community:

This fall, Pam Berenbaum's Global Health class (INTD 0257) engaged in a community-connected project in consultation with the local hospital, Porter Medical Center (part of the University of Vermont Health Network). Students researched health access and equity challenges experienced by Addison County groups (e.g. rural, isolated elderly; people with disabilities; migrant farm workers) and identified innovations tried elsewhere (e.g. telehealth; cultural competency training; social media for health program adherence). The work culminated in a public poster session on December 5. The students did a great job finding innovative ideas to present!

## Announcements:

We welcome Kristine Su as the new Global Health Project Assistant. Kristine is a senior psychology major from Los Angeles, with minors in biology and global health. She is full of great ideas! Her first accomplishment was assembling a Global Health Student Advisory Committee.

Hey, alumni! Middlebury College students would love to connect with you to learn how you got where you are in your professional journey. Share your experiences through Midd2Midd (<https://midd2midd.middlebury.edu/>), the new online platform that facilitates mentoring, networking, and outreach across the Middlebury community of students, alumni, and parents.

Best wishes for a successful, happy, and HEALTHY 2020!