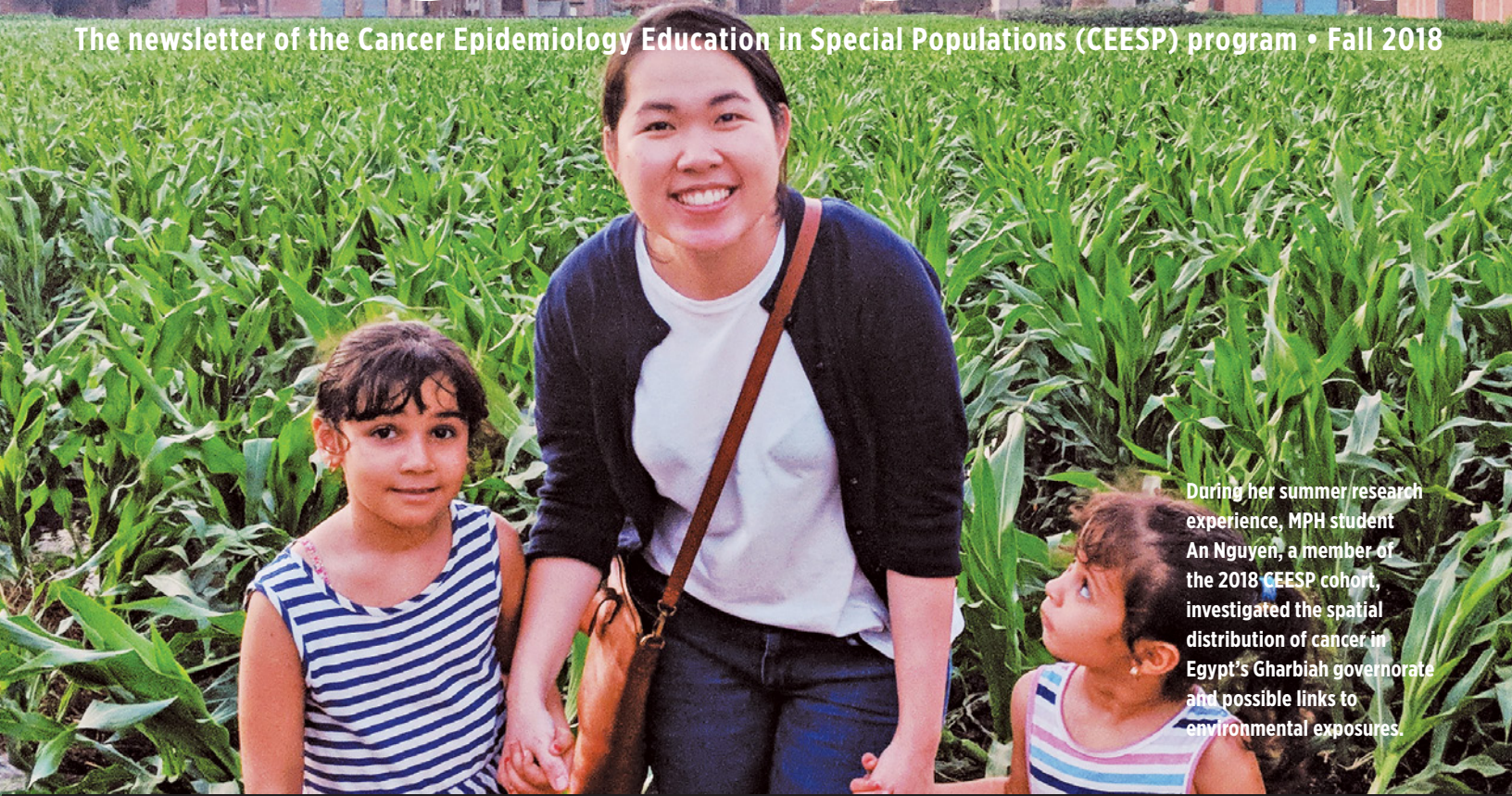


# VOICES

The newsletter of the Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) program • Fall 2018



During her summer research experience, MPH student An Nguyen, a member of the 2018 CEESP cohort, investigated the spatial distribution of cancer in Egypt's Gharbiah governorate and possible links to environmental exposures.

## Success Stories



**N**ow in its 13th year, the Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) Program is helping to shape the careers of U.S. public health students both in the United States and around the world.

Graduates of the program are pursuing successful careers in cancer research in underserved populations, and as such are advancing our understanding of cancer prevention, control, and treatment in the U.S. and globally, and improving the health of millions. I invite you to read more about them in this and subsequent issues of our newsletter.

We're now in our third five-year National Cancer Institute funding cycle at CEESP, and we are continuing to expand the program's impact and reach.

Last year we recruited students from a wider range of U.S. schools and programs of public health than in previous cycles. These students help to make our work even more productive because of the diversity of backgrounds and experiences they bring to the table. It's an exciting time for CEESP, and we look forward in coming years to recruiting students from even more public health programs and schools across the country.

We're expanding our global reach as well. For the first 10 years of its existence, CEESP was focused primarily on Africa and the Middle East, where we created a strong infrastructure for training and research. In the past two years, we've created additional strong infrastructure in other parts of the world, including Latin America and Asia. I look forward to reporting on these initiatives in future

issues of the newsletter as we continue to add new training sites worldwide.

Students from the 2017 and 2018 CEESP cohorts—after the program began national recruitment of students—are meanwhile building networks of their own by communicating and collaborating with each other after their summer research experience comes to a close. This is a welcome development, and I expect it to lead soon to a series of publications. The success of CEESP is directly linked to the success of our graduates. As we begin recruiting next year's cohort of students, I am already looking forward to tracking their productive careers in cancer research.

**Amr S. Soliman, MD, PhD**  
*CEESP Program Director*



# About the Program

The Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) program includes a four-month summer field research experience in foreign countries and among minority populations in the U.S. CEESP faculty and field collaborators have the experience to provide expert field mentorship, with the aim of training participants to implement studies in ethnically diverse settings.



Since its founding in 2006, CEESP has trained over 150 students who are now pursuing careers around the world in fields as diverse as health policy, epidemiology, emergency medicine, and medical education. CEESP graduates have worked with the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Memorial Sloan Kettering, the American Cancer Society and other major cancer centers, U.S. schools of medicine and public health, and a range of global NGOs.

CEESP continues to define cancer epidemiology in special populations as a future career discipline for public health students. “Special populations” are typically subpopulations within larger populations and have features that make them unique in some way. These populations tend to have increased numbers of higher risk individuals and share a unique environment of exposures, which make them ideally suited for focused epidemiologic studies.

For more information please visit <https://ceesp.ccny.cuny.edu>.

## ALUMNA PROFILE

# A Catalyst for Change

For **Leana May**, CEESP is nothing short of “magical.” May, DO, MPH, spent the summer of 2008 in Casablanca as a CEESP trainee, assessing epidemiological data on pediatric brain tumors across Morocco and visiting both primary and secondary treatment sites. “It was the first time I had done global research,” she remembers, “and the program added so many tools to my toolkit.”

May went on to work in Haiti and Botswana and later completed a two-year fellowship in Rwanda with Partners in Health and Boston Children’s Hospital, working to update and expand the country’s pediatric cancer treatment protocols. She’s now on the faculty of the University of Colorado School of Medicine in Denver, where she’s an assistant professor of pediatrics, serves as a clinician in pediatric emergency, and helps direct the school’s global health program.

In her spare time, May goes back to Rwanda, where she’s developing an infant warming blanket for neonatal babies at risk for hypothermia.

“I really try to combine the work I do professionally with the people I align with socially,” May says. “To me it just all overlaps so much. I’m driven by passion.”

From the moment she learned about CEESP as a prospective MPH student, May knew she wanted to be part of the program. “I was interested in global health, in clinical

medicine, and epidemiology, and I had no idea in those days if you could make a career out of those things. And here sat this training program that was basically everything I was interested in.”

Looking back on the experience today, May says CEESP was “one of those landmark experiences in my training path. I’m forever grateful.”

She’s equally grateful to have watched the program evolve in the 10 years since she graduated from CEESP. Today’s program is more diverse, she notes, with more training sites, and it’s open to students from all U.S. schools of public health. And there are over 150 CEESP graduates today, who have forged careers in different areas and can serve as mentors to new students. “It’s so exciting just looking at what CEESP offers to students today,” May says.

Most importantly, CEESP buoys the work of partner institutions around the world by contributing fresh ideas, enthusiasm, and support to scientists and health professionals who may not have the resources to pursue this kind of research on their own. That can be a game-changer, May says. “And CEESP trainees get insights into all the different areas in the field that they’re not likely to encounter in our high-income academic settings. Whatever career path the students ultimately choose, the lessons and tools gained are fantastic.” So when it comes to CEESP, May grins, “I’m a big believer.” ■



“CEESP was one of those landmark experiences in my training path. I’m forever grateful.”  
—Leana May

# New@ CEESP



CEESP is now based at the City University of New York School of Medicine, where the focus is on recruiting underrepresented populations into medicine and increasing medical services in underserved areas.

In addition to MPH students, first-year PhD students in public health are now eligible for CEESP training. The 2018 cohort included nine MPH and six PhD students.

CEESP has added three new educational modules for learning data-capturing, epidemiology subspecialties, and measurements in cancer epidemiology.

To its long-standing sites in Africa and the Middle East, CEESP has added new training sites in Mexico, Vietnam, and Argentina.



The 2018 CEESP cohort represents more than 10 different U.S. institutions, including the University of Colorado, Rutgers University, the University of Arizona, George Washington University, and the University of Maryland.

By the time they finish the CEESP program, 70 percent of CEESP students have published at least one first-author paper. Graduates of the program have published over 250 papers after leaving CEESP.

## MENTOR PROFILE

CEESP helps build a culture of research at Ocean Road Cancer Institute in Tanzania

# Julius Mwaiselage MD, PhD



Julius Mwaiselage, MD, PhD, is the executive director of the Ocean Road Cancer Institute (ORCI) in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, which has partnered with CEESP since 2010.

**Q: Why did you choose to partner with CEESP?**

**Mwaiselage:** The cancer research that CEESP students conduct with ORCI provides us with better insights into the prevention, causes, and treatment outcomes of cancer in Tanzania. Their research helps us to better plan for hospital services as well as to improve cancer prevention and treatment services.

**Q: How many students have you worked with during your eight years of partnering with CEESP?**

**Mwaiselage:** We usually work with three to four students per year, so overall we have worked with about 40 students. We get a good mix of male and female students each year.

**Q: What kinds of research collaborations do CEESP students undertake at ORCI?**

**Mwaiselage:** Research projects cover a range of topics, including studies of the uptake and barriers to prevention programs, referral patterns for patients from other health facilities to ORCI, clinical studies of patterns in HIV-related cancers, cancer stages and treatment outcomes for ORCI patients, and cancer registration data and performance. A majority of CEESP students conduct analytical research with an emphasis on cancer care in Tanzania. Around 80 percent of students publish their results.

**Q: Which special populations does ORCI primarily serve?**

**Mwaiselage:** As a National Cancer Institute, ORCI receives patients from all over Tanzania. Each year, ORCI sees about 8,000 new cancer patients—a majority of whom have advanced stage cancer. Women comprise 65 percent of our patient population. Most ORCI patients come from villages and other rural areas and have a low socioeconomic status. The greatest challenge our patients face is the high cost

of cancer services. We provide cost-sharing exemptions, but we need additional support to fund cancer care.

**Q: How has CEESP contributed to ORCI’s work?**

**Mwaiselage:** CEESP research projects have helped us improve cancer care through changed treatment guidelines and protocols and new cancer prevention programs. CEESP has helped us build a culture of research at ORCI, and we now see a lot of interest from our staff in conducting research.

**Q: What do you think is CEESP’s greatest contribution to cancer research, prevention, and treatment?**

**Mwaiselage:** CEESP has increased ORCI’s visibility around the world and has led to a revised national cervical cancer prevention program in Tanzania and to new measures aimed at mitigating barriers to screenings. Treatment protocols at ORCI have also been revised as a result of CEESP research. Last but not least, CEESP has helped us improve the use of medical records for research by establishing an electronic medical record system at ORCI. ■



## STUDENT PROFILE



## CEESP 2018 Cohort

The 2018 CEESP cohort gathered in New York City in August for a three-day post-summer career development workshop. Students presented research findings, shared stories, and heard from CEESP alumni and faculty experts.

Collectively, the 2018 cohort trained in more than a dozen sites in the U.S. and around the world, including Argentina and Vietnam. They conducted research on a variety of cancers, among them breast, colorectal, pancreatic, prostate, liver, and cervical cancers. They questioned the prevalence of certain cancers in particular populations, examined links to environmental pollutants and socioeconomic factors, assessed geographic and other obstacles to screenings and treatment, and explored potential interventions.

Key among the lessons learned were patience, perseverance, and cultural competence. “I learned flexibility and adaptability,” said **Dora**

**Valencia**, a University of Arizona MPH student who worked with the National Cancer Institute in Buenos Aires. “I could easily have felt discouraged, but I decided to keep going and ended up designing a training module for their survey.”

**Melody Kitchen**, an MPH student at the University of South Florida, said her training experience in Israel taught her the importance of acknowledging culturally different modes of communication and deepened her interest in addressing health disparities among Arab-Israelis and Palestinians.

CEESP faculty expert **Joseph O'Donnell**, MD, former Senior Associate Dean for Education and Emeritus Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at Dartmouth, said, “This program is doing exactly what it promised to do—producing a future workforce that will apply the most current cancer epidemiology methods to situations across the U.S. and around the world. CEESP is growing the future.” ■

## Alumni Notes

A cancer epidemiologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York City, **Elizabeth Kantor**, MPH, PhD, CEESP '08, is conducting studies on colorectal cancer risk and chemotherapy dosing in obese women. Kantor says her CEESP experience—working at Ibn Rochd Hospital in Casablanca, Morocco—gave her invaluable “self-help skills,” including how to be resourceful.

**Mario Trejo**, MPH, CEESP '17, is pursuing a PhD in epidemiology at the University of Arizona, which awarded him the 2018 Initiative for Maximizing Student Development Fellowship. Trejo spent the summer of 2018 in Zambia, helping to train students in the 2018 CEESP cohort and working with a software engineer to develop appropriate ways of linking national infectious-disease, cancer, and screening databases.

**Emily Vogtmann**, PhD, MPH, CEESP '07–09, is a research fellow in the Metabolic Epidemiology Branch, Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, of the National Cancer Institute. Her research focuses on the association between the microbiota and risk for cancer, as well as on how cancer risk factors may modify the human microbiota. Thanks to CEESP, she says, “I was able to have many more opportunities during my PhD work. CEESP helped set me up for my future career.”

# APPLY NOW

**Application Deadline:**  
**January 7, 2019**

The Cancer Epidemiology Education in Special Populations (CEESP) program is now accepting applications for the summer of 2019. This unique, fully funded research training program provides critical field research experience in 17 countries around the world and among minority populations in the United States. The program is open to MPH and first-year PhD students in public health. Training includes preparatory core courses, short modular courses, special studies, and a four-month summer field research experience with strong mentorship. Participants gain the skills and experience to implement studies in ethnically diverse settings, both in other countries and among migrant populations in the United States.

Application form and information at <http://ceesp.ccny.cuny.edu>

## VOICES

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