

## MENTOR PROFILE

## Egypt's Emad Shash

Prior to the opening of Shefaa Al-Orman Hospital (SOH) in Luxor—the first comprehensive cancer treatment center in upper Egypt—countless Egyptians had to travel long distances for cancer care. For most of the nearly one million inhabitants of this southern, largely rural region, Cairo—12 hours away by car—was the nearest site for routine procedures like screenings and treatment.



All of that changed in 2016, says physician and CEESP mentor **Emad Shash** of the National Cancer Institute at Cairo University, who oversees different aspects of the health care system in Egypt. With new outpatient clinics, radiotherapy facilities, and a new pediatric oncology wing, the Luxor center addresses the vast need for cancer care in upper Egypt. SOH now has 14,000 registered patients, with an additional 27,000 receiving treatment. No one is turned away—making SOH a literal lifesaver



Shefaa Al-Orman Hospital

for Egyptians of every socioeconomic class—and thanks to Egypt's increasingly expanding universal health care insurance system, more and more people in the region have access to care.

SOH also serves as a training center for physicians, nurses, and pharmacists, and as an educational center for the wider public. CEESP is an important part of teaching and research at SOH, and Shash says he looks forward to continuing the collaboration. This summer he mentored two students, Doris Chiu, who

researched colorectal cancer, and Melissa Huestis, who focused on breast cancer. Working with CEESP, Shash says, is a way of thinking “out of the box to get solutions for the problems we face.” Cancer epidemiology is different from basic epidemiology, and students like Chiu and Huestis, he notes, “clearly know how to dig into the data and how to make the statistical tabulations and calculations to get us the information we need.” CEESP is furthermore helping Shash and his colleagues build a robust cancer registry in upper Egypt and forge ties with other facilities in the region.

For the CEESP students themselves, Shash observes, the summer training program provides a rich learning activity. “When you speak to a person from a different culture, who has a different point of view, you learn from this.” But it's a two-way street. “I learn from my students too. They come with new information that I don't have. So it's a learning process for me, for my students, for everyone.” ■

## STUDENT PROFILE

## “Incredible Work Is Being Done”



An MPH student in epidemiology and biostatistics at the CUNY School of Public Health, **Doris Chiu** specifically wanted to study colorectal cancer in southern Egypt, where rates of early-onset colorectal cancer are notably high in people under 40. “It's a unique age distribution,” Chiu says, although she adds that early-onset rates are also increasing in countries like the United States. “Questions remain as to why this is happening.”

Because most prior research on this type of cancer in Egypt was based on data sources in northern Egypt, the existence of Shefaa Al-Orman Hospital offers new opportunities for tracking the incidence and age distribution of cancers.

As a 2023 CEESP student, Chiu used data from 2018 to 2022 to assess colon and rectal cancer rates for two administrative boundaries in upper Egypt: Luxor and Qena. Together, Luxor

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and Qena comprise the majority of cases seen at SOH. Chiu also looked at colorectal cancer rates from smaller providers in the region, “so we're confident that we're looking at population-based data rather than just hospital data.” “While there's a difference between northern and southern Egypt,” Chiu says, “we're anticipating finding similar results about age distribution here as compared to there. But I'm also excited just to have more up-to-date information about southern Egypt to add to the literature, to possibly improve screening and treatment.” She finds the overall spirit at SOH especially inspiring. And CEESP, she notes, “is one more avenue through which to uplift the incredible work that's being done.” ■

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