



## ISAP's *Iraq Drug Demand Reduction Initiative* Provides Clinical Trainings for Iraqi Health Professionals in Cairo, Egypt



By Grace Kim, Staff Research Associate II ([gracekim@ucla.edu](mailto:gracekim@ucla.edu))

The first major clinical training event for ISAP's *Iraq Drug Demand Reduction Initiative* occurred in Cairo, Egypt, in February 2012.

ISAP's Richard Rawson (*back row, 4th from left in the above photo*), project director and principal investigator, along with Grace Kim (*front row, left*), project coordinator, and Alex Olson (*front row, right*), evaluations administrator, traveled to Cairo with the 12-person Iraqi trainee team for three weeks to participate in substance use trainings throughout Egypt.

The trainee team, made up of two psychiatrists, five psychiatric nurses, three psychologists, and two social workers, participated in one week of didactic classroom sessions at Kasr el Ainy (Cairo University [CU]) Department of Psychiatry Hospital (trainings were provided by Dr. Rawson and CU faculty); one week of clinical site visits at various treatment facilities in Cairo and Maadi; and two days of participation in a psychiatric conference.

A wrap-up session (after which the above photo was taken) ended the three-week visit, and evaluation data were subsequently collected. For many of the trainees, it was their first time visiting Egypt. The overall experience was very encouraging for all participants, with this event being a very promising beginning to the development of a qualified, professional staff to deliver treatment for Iraqis with substance use disorders.

For more information on the *Iraq Drug Demand Reduction Initiative*, which is supported by SAMHSA, in collaboration with the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, please visit <http://www.uclaisap.org/html/samhsa-grant-IRAQ.html>.

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## Iraq Holds First Community Epidemiology Meeting on Nature/Extent of Substance Use in the Country

By Grace Kim, Staff Research Associate II

**R**ichard Rawson (an ISAP associate director) and Al Hasson (an ISAP project director) traveled to Baghdad, Iraq, from May 5-12, to help carry out the first Iraq Community Epidemiology Workgroup (I-CEWG) meeting for the *Iraq Drug Demand Reduction Initiative*.

The I-CEWG meeting was held at the Sheraton Ishtar Hotel in Baghdad on May 8-9 and turned out to be a tremendous success.

Meeting participants discussed the importance and methods for developing a capacity in Iraq for better understanding the nature and extent of drug and alcohol use in the country and reviewed the existing data on this topic.

The meeting brought together Iraqi leaders from the substance use disorders sector, public health sector, and mental health sector, as well as law enforcement representatives, university teachers and researchers, governorate representatives, NGO members, representatives from the Ministries of Health, Interior, Labor & Social Affairs, Youth & Sports, and Justice, and in-



ISAP's Al Hasson and Richard Rawson (*center*) and the two gentlemen who were responsible for their safety as they traveled in Iraq for the country's first Community Epidemiology Workgroup meeting.

ternational technical assistance experts. Attendees presented 14 reports on the status of substance use in Iraq.

Dr. Rawson and Al Hasson's major tasks were to assist the Iraqi team in hosting the I-CEWG meeting and help prepare the report from the meeting.

They also met with the Iraq Ministry of Health's Deputy Minister of Health, the Inspector General for the Ministry of Health, members of the I-CEWG team (Drs. Nesif Al-Hemiary, Mushtaq Al-Hachami, and Jawad Al-Diwan), and project steering committee members (Drs. Sabah Sadik, Salih Al-Hasnawi, and Emad Abdulghani).

In addition, plans, including training protocols and strategies, were finalized for the screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) trainings that were completed during the summer of 2012 in Iraq.

The *Interim Report of the Inaugural Iraq Community Epidemiology Work Group* is available on the UCLA ISAP web site at <http://www.uclaisap.org/iraq/html/cewg-report.html>.

## ISAP INVEST Fellow Translates NIDA Publications into Farsi

**S**aeed Momtazi, MD, a recent visiting scholar at ISAP from Iran, and colleagues have translated NIDA's popular publication, *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction*, as well as other NIDA publications, into Farsi, the most common Persian language.

The publication, which is in the public domain and therefore can be freely reproduced and distributed, provides information on the disease of drug addiction, including the numerous harmful consequences of substance abuse and the basic methods that have been developed to prevent and treat the disease.



Dr. Saeed Momtazi of Zanjan University of Medical Sciences, Iran, on the UCLA campus.

## Vietnamese Master Trainers Visit ISAP for Continuing Trainings in Drug Abuse Treatment

By Grace Kim, Staff Research Associate II

**D**r. Le Cong Thien and Ms. Nguyen Thu Trang, master trainers for the Vietnam HIV-Addiction Technology Transfer Center (VH-ATTC) project, came to UCLA ISAP for trainings from May 7 – June 2.

Dr. Thien (a psychiatrist) and Ms. Trang (a nurse) were selected to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to be resource persons in Vietnam, capable of teaching a wide variety of substance use disorder topics.

During their month-long stay, Dr. Thien and Ms. Trang participated in an extensive daily training in methadone clinic operations at the Matrix Institute's Washington branch, a motivational interviewing skills training at Los Angeles Department of Mental Health and Friends Health Center, clinical treatment planning at Tarzana Treatment Center, counselor and key su-



Master substance abuse treatment trainers from Vietnam, Le Cong Thien and Nguyen Thu Trang (*front row on right*) and ISAP staff Jose Gutierrez, Grace Kim, and Walter Ling (*front row from left*), and Sherry Larkins, Alex Olson, Albert Hasson, Valerie Antononi, and Richard Rawson (*back row from left*) after sharing a meal in Los Angeles.

pervisor trainings at Matrix Woodland Hills, and screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) and training-of-trainers training at UCLA ISAP.

Having developed excellent teaching and presentation skills based on UNODC Treatnet training curricula (see <https://www.unodc.org/treatment/index.html>), both Dr. Thien and Ms. Trang conducted mock training sessions for ISAP staff, with opportunities for feedback.

Dr. Thien and Ms. Trang are

now developing a cadre of SBIRT trainers in Vietnam.

For more information on the VH-ATTC, which is supported by SAMHSA, in collaboration with the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), please visit <http://www.uclaisap.org/html/samhsa-grant-VIETNAM.html>.

## Fellow from Iran to Study HIV and Drug Use in Isfahan, Iran

**D**r. Seyed Ramin Radfar, director general of Iran's Thought, Culture and Health Institute, has been awarded a fellowship from the International AIDS Society and the National Institute on Drug Abuse to study HIV and drug use in Iran under the mentorship of ISAP Associate Director Richard Rawson beginning May 2013.

During his 10-month fellowship, Dr. Radfar will conduct a mixed method, qualitative-quantitative study in Isfahan, Iran, designed to examine the overall prevalence and characteristics of

amphetamine-type stimulant (ATS) use among drug users in opioid substitution therapy (methadone/buprenorphine) and the impact of ATS use on the HIV epidemic in Isfahan.

Dr. Radfar also will provide local health authorities with recommendations for reducing ATS-related harms among drug users in Isfahan.



Dr. Seyed Ramin Radfar, director general of Iran's Thought, Culture and Health Institute.

By Christine E. Grella, ISAP Associate Director  
(cgrella@mednet.ucla.edu)

### Predocs:

**Nancy Jo Kepple** (MSW, UCLA, 2007) is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Social Welfare at UCLA and a second-year predoctoral fellow at ISAP. Her research focuses on the ecological effects of alcohol and drug availability upon violence outcomes, such as assaults and child maltreatment. She also has studied the ecological effects of medical marijuana dispensaries on crime in local communities.

Nancy is currently exploring how community factors, including alcohol and drug availability, contribute to disparities in rates of child maltreatment behaviors for her dissertation research, and preparing an F31 (dissertation grant) application to the National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD).

**Camillia Lui** (PhD, UCLA, 2012) recently completed her PhD in Community Health Sciences in the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. Her research weaves together a life-course perspective and health-disparities approach to understanding substance use and abuse during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. In 2011, Camillia won the first annual *Preventing Chronic Disease Student Research Contest* for a paper she authored (with Steve Wallace) entitled: "A Common Denominator: Calculating Hospitalization Rates for Ambulatory Care-Sensitive Conditions in California." In January, Camillia will become a postdoctoral trainee at the UC Berkeley/Public Health Institute's Alcohol Research Group.

**Suzanne Spear** (PhD, UCLA, 2012) recently received her PhD in Community Health Sciences from the UCLA Fielding School of Public Health. Her dissertation examined the relationship between cohesion among substance abuse treatment providers and readmissions to detox treatment using social network analysis. She completed the ISAP predoctoral program in June 2011;

in July 2011 she received an F31 (dissertation grant) from NIDA for the remainder of her graduate work, which she completed in June. She was awarded the Dean's outstanding graduating student award from the UCLA Department of Community Health. She recently accepted a position as assistant research

professor at the School of Social Work at the University of Southern California and remains a colleague and collaborator with ISAP.

### Postdocs:

**H. Isabella Lanza** (PhD, Psychology, Temple University, 2010) recently completed the ISAP postdoctoral training program. Her research is primarily

focused on evaluating biobehavioral and contextual processes linking child obesity to maladaptive adolescent outcomes, such as problematic substance use, conduct problems, and poorer academic achievement. She also works on the UCLA Middle School Diversity Project in the School of Education, which examines physical health outcomes. She currently has two papers based on her research that are in press, and four others under review. While a trainee, she submitted two R03 applications to NIH to continue her research on developmental pathways to co-occurring obesity and risk behaviors. One of these applications was recently funded by NIDA (RO3DA033497-01A1) for a study entitled: *Obesity and Substance Use: Identifying Pathways and Processes in Adolescence*; the second is currently pending funding from NICHD. She has transitioned to a position as principal investigator at ISAP and will also work as a research associate with CALDAR.

**Howard Padwa** (PhD, History, UCLA, 2008) has a background in historical policy analysis with a focus on European drug policy. His most recent book, *Social Poison: The Culture and Politics of Opiate Control in Britain and France, 1821-1926*, was published in 2012. Howard also works at the UCLA Center for

(Please see *Postdocs* on Page 5)



From left: H. Isabella Lanza, Howard Padwa, Nancy Jo Kepple, Suzanne Spear, and Camillia Lui, current and recent ISAP pre- and postdoctoral trainees.

By Michael Prendergast, Principal Investigator, and Jerry Cartier, Project Director (jcartier@ucla.edu)

Although screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment (SBIRT) has been found to be effective in a variety of settings, including primary care, emergency departments, hospital trauma centers, and colleges and universities, it has received limited attention in criminal justice settings.

Criminal offenders have a high prevalence of drug and alcohol use at varying levels of severity and often do not receive adequate intervention, either because of the limited availability of programs, low motivation, or limited awareness of the consequences of their substance use.

Under a grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse, ISAP has begun a randomized study of the use of SBIRT with jail inmates who are nearing the end of their sentence. It builds on a previous study by ISAP of SBIRT with jail detainees funded by SAMHSA.

Inmates will be recruited at two Los Angeles County Sheriff jail facilities, one for men and one for women, and will be randomly assigned to the treatment (SBIRT) group ( $n = 400$ ) or to the control (no intervention) group ( $n = 400$ ).

Subjects in both groups will be screened for substance use risk using the Alcohol, Smoking, and Substance Involvement Screening Test (ASSIST), developed by the World Health Organization.

Control subjects will receive only their risk score and informational materials regarding the health risks of substance use. Experimental subjects, in addition to their risk score and informational materials, will receive a brief intervention from trained health educators and a referral to treatment appropriate to their risk score.

Inmates needing treatment will be referred either to a brief treatment intervention (six telephone sessions) or to one of the county's Community Assessment Services Centers (CASCs) for further assessment. Staff from Homeless Healthcare Los Angeles will administer the ASSIST to participants in the SBIRT group and provide the brief intervention and brief treatment.

Twelve months after study admission, all study participants will be contacted for a follow-up interview. As part of the follow-up, information on subject participation in publicly funded treatment will be obtained from the Substance Abuse Prevention and Control Division of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and arrest data will be obtained from the California Department of Justice.

The study is being led by Michael Prendergast, with Jerry Cartier as the Project Director and Kory Van Unen as research assistant. Two other staff will be hired as interviewers. For more information, please contact Jerry Cartier at jcartier@ucla.edu.

### Postdocs

(Continued from Page 4)

Health Services and Society, where he is a member of an interdisciplinary team researching the public mental health system in Los Angeles County. He has participated in several ongoing studies that examine the integration of substance use disorder services within both mental health and primary care. Currently, he is working on several papers that address treatment capacity for co-occurring disorders in both mental health and substance abuse programs, the way that "recovery" is defined within mental health treatment, and self-efficacy and behavioral change in health-related behaviors among primary care patients. Howard recently began a Translational Research Fellowship in a training program jointly sponsored by UCLA and USC with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health, and also continues to collaborate with colleagues at ISAP.

In July, we welcomed a new cohort of trainees to the ISAP Training Program:

**Catherine Branson**, a graduate student in the UCLA Department of Community Health Sciences, has research interests in substance use and HIV risks among high-risk populations, including men who have sex with men who are substance users and homeless and delinquent youth.

**Preeta Saxena**, completed her PhD in sociology at UC Riverside in June with a dual specialization in criminology and gender studies. Her research interests are in the relationships among gender, stigma, criminal behavior, and substance use.

**Angie Ontiniano Verissimo**, who completed her PhD in Community Health Sciences in 2011 at UCLA, has research interests in understanding relationships among discrimination, health disparities, criminal justice involvement, and substance use.

**I**ndian Country Today, a widely distributed publication addressing Native American issues, recently highlighted the work of Daniel Dickerson, an Alaska Native assistant research psychiatrist and addiction psychiatrist at UCLA ISAP.

The article reported on a recent presentation Dr. Dickerson gave at the 2012 Association of American Indian Physicians (AAIP) meeting in Anchorage, Alaska.

His talk focused on preliminary results from his research study "Drum-Assisted Recovery Therapy for Native Americans (DARTNA): Pretest Results and Final Treatment Development," which was funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM).

DARTNA is a 12-week substance abuse treatment program that utilizes drumming as its core component, along with drumming/cultural education and talking circles/processing groups.

Currently in the final stages of development, DARTNA was provided to 10 American Indians/Alaska Natives (AIs/ANs) with histories of substance use disorders in order to obtain feedback to inform the final formatting of DARTNA and to obtain preliminary results regarding its potential benefits. The program was provided at United American Indian Involvement, Inc., in Los Angeles.

Dr. Dickerson reported that participants benefited from the program in that they reported decreased depression and anxiety, enhanced concentration, increased energy, decreased fatigue, and enhanced spirituality.

"At this point, we have had a pretest that has shown promising results," Dr. Dickerson said. "What we are working on next is designing a clinical trial so we can compare it to a standard typical treatment. Establishing statistical evidence through clinical trials can help pave the way for policy changes and reimbursement from insurance companies."

Substance abuse has been persistently high in AI/AN communities. However, Dr. Dickerson stated that identified treatments that are culturally relevant and effective for AIs/ANs are very limited.

Utilizing a culturally grounded, tradition-based treatment for AIs/ANs raises many questions.

Besides the main question of the study, "Can the drum be used in a culturally appropriate manner for substance abuse cases?" Dr. Dickerson said that the DARTNA

study may answer other relevant questions, such as "How important is it, culturally, to accompany singing with drumming?"

Also, according to Dr. Dickerson, in many tribes drumming is not a role traditionally prescribed for women. Thus, another question is, "What are the roles of females in drumming activities?"



Dr. Daniel Dickerson

In designing the DARTNA program, Dr. Dickerson also faces a challenge regarding the diversity of drumming traditions among indigenous tribes in that the use of drums varies from tribe to tribe.

To read the complete *Indian Country Today* article, please visit:

<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com>.

Dr. Dickerson can be reached at [daniel.dickerson@ucla.edu](mailto:daniel.dickerson@ucla.edu).

## Calendar of Events

### November 2012

Nov. 7 & 8

**Integrating Substance Use, Mental Health, and Primary Care**

**Services: A Bridge to Health Reform**

Sheraton Hotel, Universal City, CA

Contact: Jose Gutierrez - [joseagutierrez@mednet.ucla.edu](mailto:joseagutierrez@mednet.ucla.edu); 310-267-5415

For more info: [www.uclaisap.org/cod](http://www.uclaisap.org/cod)

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UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs (ISAP)  
Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior  
Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences  
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA  
405 Hilgard Ave., Box 956913  
Los Angeles, CA 90095-6913  
Phone: 310-267-5020

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**Director**

Walter Ling, M.D.

**Associate Directors**

Richard A. Rawson, Ph.D.

Christine E. Grella, Ph.D.

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**ISAP Publications**

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