



May 26 through May 31, 2016

Newsletter 1

## THEY'RE OFF!

After a rigorous selection process and taking a semester of coursework on how to conduct research abroad, seven undergraduate and 1 graduate student boarded planes for their international destinations. Every Wednesday (hopefully) the newsletter will chronicle some their research activities, cultural experiences, and interesting observations, so we can all *Stay Connected*.

### Bangkok, Thailand - Meet Meno, Gabby, Tiffany and Jeff



The group left Honolulu on Thursday, May 26 and ~19 hours later were met at the Bangkok airport by Dr. James Kelley, who is a member of the UH faculty conducting research on dengue virus pathogenesis in Thailand. James will be an important part of the students away from home ohana. The first week, Jeff is reporting for the group and had this to say about their first two days in Thailand. "Our bodies are still trying

Name (major)	Project title	UH and Foreign mentors	Institution
Gabrielle Gregorio (Mol Cell Biol)	Genetic determinants associated with outcomes in melioidosis	William Gosnell and Narisara Chantratita	Mahidol University (Fac of Medicine)
Tiffany Nguyen (Biology)	Chronic kidney disease biomarkers	Ric Yangihara, Nelson Lazaga (PhD candidate) and Nuankanya Sathira	Mahidol University (Fac of Science)
Michael Meno (Mol Cell Biol)	Producing monoclonal antibodies to Chikungunya virus	Axel Lerher and Pornsawan Leangwutiwong	Mahidol University (Fac of Medicine)
Jeff Remo (Public Health)	Prophylaxis use for HIV at community service sites	Jane Simoni and Nittaya Phanuphak	Thai Red Cross

to acclimate to the jetlag as most of us woke up extremely early today (Sunday). Since most of us woke up early, we decided to make use of the free time that we had. Today we visited the Grand Palace and Wat Pho. We all thought it was breathtaking but then again, the humidity could have contributed to that. It was nice and cool in the morning but we all ended up dripping sweat after the end of our adventures today. We are all excited to start tomorrow and begin our research!"



### New Delhi, India - Meet John and Tiana

Name (major)	Project title	UH and Foreign mentors	Institution
Tiana Elisara (Mol Cell Biol)	<i>Helicobacter pylori</i> modulate HIV immunopathogenesis	Saguna Verma and Ravi Tandon	JNU, New Delhi
John Ngo (Biochemistry)		Mukesh Kumar and Ravi Tandon	JNU, New Delhi



This is the first year MHIRT-Hawai'i has sent students to India. John graduated in May with a BS in Biochemistry and traveled with his family to Vietnam where he had a chance to visit relatives he had not seen in 14 years. So he traveled from Ho Chi Minh City to New Delhi on May 28<sup>th</sup>, where he was met by Dr. Tandon and taken to the university guest house. Tiana left Honolulu for Newark, New Jersey on May 27<sup>th</sup>, where she had a long layover and had a chance to visit with family members. She then boarded on

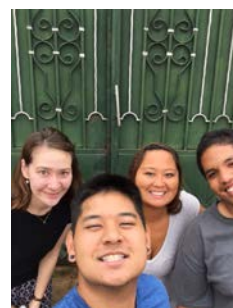
what should have been a 9.65 hour flight from Newark to New Delhi; however, due to bad weather, the plane landed in Mumbai (Bombay) (see photo on the right). Fortunately, the airlines put her up in a nice hotel to wait until the weather changed. Tiana made it to New Delhi on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 3 days after she left Honolulu. So, Tiana, you win the prize for the longest travel time (but not by much, see below). Because they just arrived, MHIRT-India has not sent their weekly report. Stay tuned we'll catch up with them next week.



### Yaoundé, Cameroon - Meet Michael, Jessie and Ernest (and Yukie)

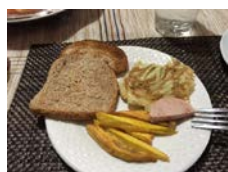
Name (major)	Project title	UH and Foreign mentors	Institution
Michael Fernandez (Biological Chemistry)	Molecular characterization of Hepatitis C virus in Cameroon	Kenji Mfuh Obadia and Richard Njouom	Virology Unit, Centre Pasteur Cameroun (CPC)
Jessie Kai (PhD student, in Human Nutrition)	Comparison of nutritional value of Hawaiian and Cameroonian avocados	Maria Stewart and Gabriel Agbor & Lawrence Ayong	Center for Research on Medicinal Plants, IMPM
Ernest Puletasi (Bioengineering)	Pathogenesis of Non-TB mycobacteria	Sam Yunga Sara Eyangoh and Valerie Donkeng	Mycobacteriology Unit, CPC & Jamot Hospital

On Thursday, May 26, MHIRT-Cameroon left Honolulu at 10:12 pm headed for Seattle. Michael, Jessie and Ernest were accompanied by Yukie Lloyd who is a PhD candidate in the Department of Tropical Medicine, Medical Microbiology & Pharmacology. Yukie will help the students adjust to their new Cameroonian environment (she speaks French) and she will conduct her own research project at the Biotechnology Center, University of Yaoundé 1 on immune responses to malaria in pregnant women. After 6 hours in Seattle, they boarded a plane for Paris, where they arrived 10 hours later. Three hours later, they were off to Yaoundé, Cameroon. Good news! Everyone and their luggage (including research supplies) arrived at Nsimalen Airport (total transit time ~36 hrs). Abanda (a PhD candidate at the University of Hawai'i) met them at the airport along with Louis (our project assistant). After clearing Customs, they were soon at their summer home which is located in the compound of Professors Robert and Rose Leke. Upon arrival, they were treated to a lovely meal before retiring.



Here are some comments and photos of their first reports:

Michael reports, "After about one and a half days of living in Cameroon we have experienced many different cultural things. One of the best things cultural things that we have experienced was having a personal cook. The cook's name is Marie and she cooks amazing food. Everything from vegetables, plantains, to beef and chicken to fruits were all delicious. They feed us extremely well here and I am never hungry."



"During lunch one of Prof. Leke's colleagues came in and dropped off a dish full of food. When Prof. Leke opened the dish I first thought it was full of mushrooms. When Prof. Leke took a bite of food it looked like it had a consistency of clams. He then went and



told us that it was a delicacy that he eats once a year, jumbo sized African snails!!! The texture was very chewy/rubbery and tasted very interesting."

Ernest's initial impressions: "There are multiple languages that are spoken like French, English and African dialect. I was surprised at one of the languages that I like to call "automobile language". Uncle Joshua drove on the road, honked three times, flashed his lights twice, and drove on the opposite side of the road creating a three lane in a two lane area. It was as if he was communicating to the other drivers and they understood exactly what he was saying. It was such a great experience." (Readers: Let's not try this in Hawai'i).

Jessie noted that "I recently read cancer is a silent killer in this country. Oncology is the focus of my research at Manoa. I'm beginning to feel this is fate. Thank you with true sincerity for accepting me into MHIRT and for this wonderful experience."

The students will begin their research projects on Tuesday. So everyone made it safely to their research sites where we hope they will have a great "work-cation." (Thanks Abanda for coining this word).