



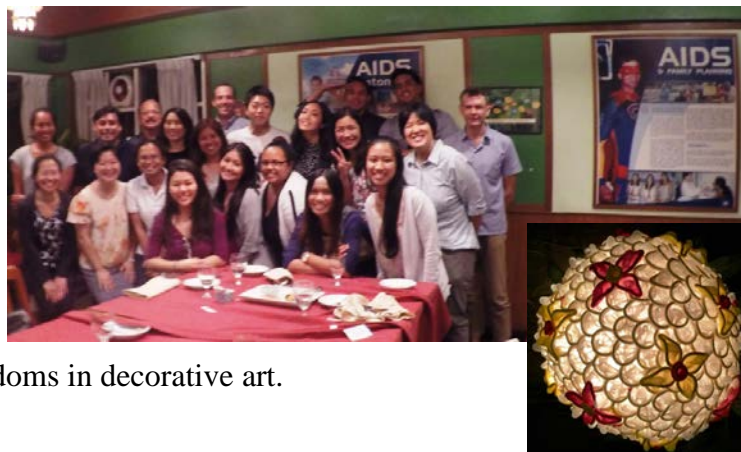
A weekly newsletter for students, family, faculty, mentors, and friends  
June 3 through June 10, 2015  
Newsletter 2

## MHIRT 2015 STUDENTS ARE EMBRACING CULTURAL DIFFERENCES, FORMING AN AWAY-FROM-HOME 'OHANA, AND STARTING THEIR RESEARCH PROJECTS

Each week, MHIRT students submit a progress report about their research and cultural experiences that form the basis for this Newsletter. Not surprisingly, this week's common themes were found throughout their reports. Clearly, the students are learning about cultural differences, bonding into a group of colleagues, and starting their research projects.

Experiencing cultural differences is a part of the MHIRT experience. Samantha reported that "the first day in [Bangkok] Thailand I was overwhelmed. Walking around, I realized I wasn't in Hawaii Kai anymore." However, she says "My perspective of Thailand has changed drastically since the first day. The people that I have interacted with are so nice and so helpful." Sairel says that "Thailand is definitely different from Hawai'i even in just the sheer size of buildings, malls and the people." Maya related that "I have been having many amazing cultural experiences here in Thailand. It is very relieving to me that Thai culture is similar to Hawaii culture, in that people are very friendly and helpful. A smile can say a lot and get you far here – a fact that warms my heart and reminds me of home." Up in Chiang Mai, Raphael noted that "People in Chiang Mai are very friendly and like to smile at *farang* (foreigners)." I stand out, but Mc Millan blends in." "I am a tuktuk [kind of taxi driver] magnet; they always stop and ask me if I want to ride with them." "Thai people appreciate when you speak Thai with them. Thank God for Youtube ... that's how I'm learning!" Robinson says that "Munich is still treating me well. I enjoy the social time that German's dedicate to each other at the end of the work day." "... people here are really in tune with each other [and] can carry on conversations for hours until the sun goes down around 9:30pm."

On June 2, Dr. Nerurkar treated the MHIRT students, other UH students in Bangkok, and Thai faculty mentors to dinner at a restaurant called Cabbage and Condoms. The restaurant opened during the HIV/AIDS epidemic and brings awareness to this infectious disease and its prevention. It was, thus, an appropriate place for the group to dine. Besides, the food is exceptional. Maya, the artist in the group, provided the photo on the right showing the use of condoms in decorative art.



It is not surprising that the students are establishing a special bond. The 8 students in Bangkok are living at Viva Gardens, with two students per apartment (photo ->). Taneesha, who is away from Hawaii for the first time, confesses that, "The first couple of days I was a little homesick because it felt strange being away from my 'ohana and staying with people I've only known for a few months. However, these so-called "people", who I am very proud and honored to call my colleagues, are the most kind-hearted, intelligent and passionate people I've ever met. They understand that this is my first



time traveling and really take care of me well.” Other students mirrored the same thought about camaraderie. The MHIRT students in Bangkok travel together to work via the BTS (photo), where 4 students work at Mahidol University, in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology (photo). By living, traveling, working and having fun together, MHIRT students develop life-long friendships. Although Robinson is alone in Germany, he seems to be surviving well. Last weekend he took a small trip (see next newsletter) and found “On my little trip, I met a number of young, solo travelers which I’m realizing is very common in Europe.” So, Robinson is meeting a lot of other solo folks his age.

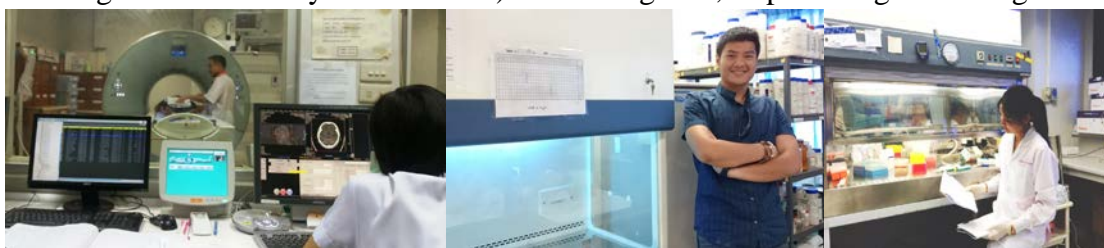


Photos of the BST system

Madhiol University

Taneesha, Sairel, Kellyan, Maya and Dr. Kelly

The first week of research is always one of the hardest, because one has to learn so much: including taking training in research safety, reading and understanding standard operating procedures (SOPs), learning new techniques, and just adjusting to a new situation. Each of the MHIRT students had similar experiences during their first week. Sairel reported “This week I met p  e June and p  e Phon (p  e is Thai for someone older) who will be my mentor .... for the time being. I was very nervous at first, but they proved to be extremely friendly and open about teaching and getting me comfortable in their lab. The past three days was basically training on how to extract the LPS from *B. pseudomalleri* .... including the safety precautions that must be taken when working with pure phenol.” Chaewon reported, she and her mentor, Eleanore “discussed background information surrounding HIV and HPV.” Including “...several research articles ... provided to me before my arrival in Bangkok.” At SEARCH, Sai says he “began to familiarize myself more with the project at hand by doing literature searches and reviews of Transgender Women (TGW) and men who have sex with men (MSM).” At AFRIMS, Christian got his “medical records cleared to work and started reading the SOPs for the facility.” After which, he happily reports, “I was finally cleared by administration to do research.” (Ah, working at a US military research lab!) At Chiang Mai, Raphael began training in radiology at Maharaj Nakorn



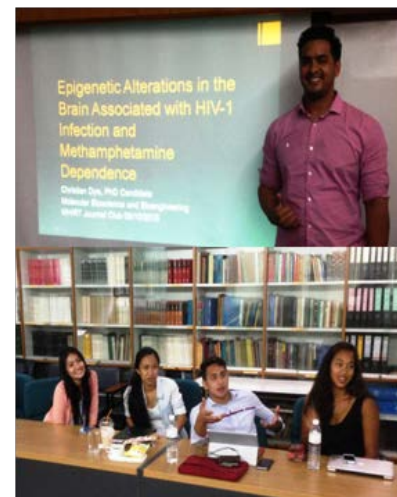
Hospital, by shadowing physicians, residents, and nurses in CT, MRI, and radiotherapy (left photo). He says, he “learned the procedures for scanning patients

and processing the x-ray images for the physicians.” Mc Millan learned to prepare agar medium to culture “his mold” *Penicillium marneffeii* (middle photo). The final photo is of Kellyan, who wrote “Picture taken for Mahidol University Newsletter. I am “candidly” posing while reading my RNA extraction protocol.”

Ah, MHIRT is making the Mahidol Newsletter. Remember, you read it here first.

Journal club started this week with Christian Dye discussing an article on “Epigenetic Alternations in the Brain associate with HIV-1 Methamphetamine Dependence.” Although Christian is interested in Epigenetics and Raphael’s research is on changes in the brain due to use of meth, the paper was of high interest to everyone. Dr. Kelley reports a rigorous discussion of the paper took place. Later in the newsletter, we’ll let Christian explain what epigenetics is.

What was Robinson doing? Well, our mechanical engineer was designing a nano-particle to use in his research (photo). No, it will not be made of Legos! It will be made by assembling DNA subunits -- A, T, C, & G.



Next week we will highlight some of the projects.  
Until then, Happy Kamehameha Day everyone!