

**GENEVA FOUNDATION
FOR MEDICAL EDUCATION AND RESEARCH**



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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Preface by the director

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER) is a non-profit organization founded in 2002. It is supported by Swiss and international institutions and works in close collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO).

For the thirteenth consecutive year, the Foundation and its partners launched a series of distance learning/online courses: a total of 158 health professionals from 35 countries participated in the online course on child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings; and a total of 93 health professionals from 36 countries participated in the training program on research methodology, research protocol development, and scientific writing.

GFMER continues the Fistula Group Program, which focuses on surgical training workshops, free patient care, education, clinical supervision fellowships, material support, and new partnerships. In 2024, several missions were conducted in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Madagascar, where Prof. Charles-Henry Rochat (who has overall responsibility for GFMER's fistula project) and his team of specialists operated on a total of 391 obstetric fistula cases during surgical workshops and routine surgical practice. Local doctors were also trained in the management of obstetric fistula.

GFMER's online courses on Global Health New Challenges, and online courses on maternal and newborn health offered in collaboration with the Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute (OMPHI) continued in 2024.

GFMER has established a strong partnership with governmental and non-governmental organizations and universities to share information and expertise on an international level.

We believe that our efforts in many countries and the programs we implement contribute to improving the health and well-being of people in need.



Prof. Aldo Campana
The Director

Mission

The overall objectives of the Foundation are to promote and develop health education and research programs.

Foundation Council

- Prof. Giuseppe Benagiano (President)
- Dr. Blaise Bourrit (Secretary)
- PD Dr. Grace Bianchi-Movarekhi
- Dr. Georges Antoine de Boccard

Executive Committee

- Prof. Aldo Campana (Director)
- Prof. Charles-Henry Rochat (Co-director)
- Dr. Karim Abawi
- PD Dr. Anne-Caroline Benski
- Dr. Hongguang Dong
- Dr. Raqibat Idris
- Mrs. Fionna Poon
- PD Dr. Pierre Vassilakos

GFMER main fields of activities

Course in child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings 2024

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/cahhs/index.htm>

Initiated by the World Health Organization Regional Office for Eastern Mediterranean (WHO EMRO), this online training course on child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings seeks to equip program managers and decision-makers with the knowledge and skills to enhance child and adolescent health outcomes, particularly in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The training course follows the operational guide on child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings.

Objectives

The course aimed to equip program staff to meet reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health (RMNCAH) needs in humanitarian emergencies by:

- Understanding comprehensive health needs from birth to adolescence.
- Strengthening emergency child and adolescent health capacity in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.
- Developing programmatic skills using a structured approach, based on key chapters of the operational guide: coordinate, assess and prioritize, respond, and monitor, evaluate and review.

Course contents

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/cahhs/weekly-schedule.htm>

The content of this course was based on WHO recommendations and the operational guide on child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings. Reference materials were also provided to the students.

The course lasted from 29 January to 10 March 2024, a total of 6 weeks to cover 4 topics:

Module 1: Coordinate - how to take a coordinated approach to child and adolescent health in a humanitarian emergency.

Module 2: Assess and prioritize - how to gather data on child and adolescent health through needs assessment and use the data to prioritize actions.

Module 3: Respond - how to plan and carry out a coordinated set of activities to deal with the identified child and adolescent health priorities.

Module 4: Monitor, evaluate and review - how to use data systems to review and improve child and adolescent health-related activities.

Course participants

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/cahhs/participants.htm>

A total of 158 health professionals from 35 countries attended the online training course on child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings. Majority of the participants (35%) were in the age group 35 to 44 years (Table 1), and women made up 56% of participants (Table 2).

Table 1: Age of participants

Age range	No. of participants	%
18-24	2	1%
25-34	46	29%
35-44	56	35%
45-54	37	23%
>55	17	11%
Total	158	100%

Table 2: Gender of participants

Gender	No. of participants	%
Cisgender (Woman)	1	1%
Female	89	56%
Male	68	43%
Total	158	100%

This course was attended by health professionals mainly from Eastern Mediterranean (68%) and African (28%), then Europe (3%), Western Pacific (1%) and America (1%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Geographic distribution of participants by WHO Regions

WHO Regions	No. of participants	%
Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)	108	68%
African Region (AFR)	45	28%
European Region (EUR)	3	2%
Western Pacific Region (WPR)	1	1%
Region of the Americas (AMR)	1	1%
Total	158	100%

Participants worked in a variety of professions, most commonly as physicians (45%), program managers/implementers (28%), and government officials (10%) (Table 4). The majority were from government organizations (39%), international organizations (31%), and international NGOs (10%) (Table 5).

Table 4: Participants' professions

Profession	No. of participants	%
Medical doctor	71	45%
Program Management / Implementation	44	28%
Government Official	16	10%
Midwife / Nurse	10	6%
Allied Health	5	3%
Student - Nursing /Midwifery / Medical	5	3%
Professor / Lecturer / Researcher	3	2%
Social scientists / Social Worker	2	1%
Pharmacist	2	1%
Total	158	100%

Table 5: Distribution of participants by type of organization

Organization type	No. of participants	%
Government organizations	61	39%
International organizations	49	31%
International NGOs	16	10%
Academic sectors	8	5%
Local NGOs	8	5%
Private organizations	5	3%
Government Hospitals / Clinics / Medical offices	4	3%
Civil societies	3	2%
Non-government Hospitals / Clinics / Medical offices	2	1%
Others	2	1%
Total	158	100%

Recruitment of participants

Participants became aware of the course in the following ways:

- Promotion of the course by the local coordinators of the GFMER in the countries and regions concerned.
- Promotion of the course on the GFMER website and on partner websites.
- Mobilization of the GFMER and WHO networks (international, regional and country-level communication). The WHO EMRO nominated and supported the majority (58%) of participants from the target countries (Afghanistan, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen). These 92 nominations included WHO regional/country offices, local and international NGOs, WHO collaborating centers at country level, ministries of health and universities.

Selection of participants

Participants were selected on the basis of the application form and the documents provided, according to established criteria. Sponsored participants were nominated by EMRO and other WHO regional and country offices, WHO headquarters and other institutions. The participants or their employers were then contacted by our team in Geneva. The list of candidates was sent to the country coordinators/tutors, who also contacted the candidates.

Teachers, partner institutions

Teachers from WHO, GFMER, and other national and international institutions were involved in teaching and tutoring the online course on Child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings.

Coaching

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/cahhs/tutors.htm>

During the course, each participant was assigned a coach to support their learning. A total of 14 coaches from 12 countries were assigned to 158 participants in their countries or nearby countries. The roles of the coaches were to:

1. collect, review and comment on participants' assignments,

2. answer any technical questions in relation to the course, and
3. facilitate participants' group work and the development and submission of group assignments.

Coaches motivated and interacted with their students through different means including email, WhatsApp, phone calls, Zoom meetings and Webinars.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods consisted of online lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, reading materials, additional references and referrals to related websites. Three live webinars were organized in which technical experts answered students' questions.

For each module, participants received assignments with very precise instructions. An assignment guide was prepared to guide participants. Tutors and coordinators revised the assignments using the assignment marking guides provided and communicated feedback to students. Participants also worked in groups to develop and submit a group assignment facilitated by their coaches. This course sensitizes health care providers and decision-makers to existing resources and builds essential knowledge and skills related to child and adolescent health in humanitarian settings.

The participation of a student was measured by the submission of assignments in the time given. A student whose work is completed, reviewed, and accepted for a given module is credited with 6 hours per week (36 hours in total), regardless of the actual time taken to complete the work. At the end of the course, the student received a certificate signed by the organizing institutions.

To support the participants, various mechanisms of communication and interaction (Facebook, Google Groups, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Zoom) were used.

Course in research methodology, research protocol development and scientific writing 2024

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/research-methodology/index.htm>

This course is organized in collaboration with the Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health & Research, World Health Organization (WHO) and the Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute (OMPHI).

Objectives

The objective of this course is to provide knowledge and skills in research methodology, research protocol development and scientific writing to health professionals in sexual and reproductive health field. The course aims to enhance participants' knowledge of research methodology and how to develop research protocols and improve their scientific writing.

Course contents

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/research-methodology/weekly-schedule.htm>

The content of this course is based on WHO recommendations, supplemented by the field experience of our faculty with a wide range of expertise in sexual and reproductive health and research. Reference materials were provided to students for use in their professional practice.

The course ran from 4 September to 29 October 2025, totaling 8 weeks. It includes four thematic areas: Literature search and referral to biomedical documents, Epidemiologic studies, Research protocol development and Scientific writing; with eight topics:

Week 1: Introduction: Research topic selection, research question and research problem statement

Week 2: Types of research, effective literature search and citing biomedical documents and sources

Week 3: Epidemiologic studies

Week 4: Systematic review and implementation research

Week 5: Sampling (sample size and sampling technique) and quantitative data collection

Week 6: Qualitative study design

Week 7: Research ethics and critical appraisal of research publication

Week 8: Research protocol development and scientific writing

Course participants

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/research-methodology/participants.htm>

A total of 93 health professionals from 36 countries attended the research methodology, research protocol development and scientific writing training program. The majority of participants (42%) were in the age group 35 to 44 years (Table 1), and 60% were men (Table 2).

Table 1: Age of participants

Age range	No. of participants	%
18-24	1	1%
25-34	34	37%
35-44	39	42%
45-54	15	16%
>55	4	4%
Total	93	100%

Table 2: Gender of participants

Gender	No. of participants	%
Female	37	40%
Male	56	60%
Total	93	100%

This course was attended by health professionals mainly from Africa (62%), Eastern Mediterranean (16%), Europe (9%), America (6%), South-East Asia (5%), and Western Pacific (1%) (Table 3).

Table 3: Geographic distribution of participants by WHO Regions

WHO Regions	No. of participants	%
African Region (AFR)	58	62%
Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR)	15	16%
European Region (EUR)	8	9%
Region of the Americas (AMR)	6	6%
South-East Asian Region (SEAR)	5	5%
Western Pacific Region (WPR)	1	1%
Total	93	100%

Table 4 shows the proportions between the different professions, with the largest group of participants being physicians (43%). The majority came from government organizations (28%) (Table 5).

Table 4: Participants' professions

Profession	No. of participants	%
Medical doctor	40	43%
Professor / Lecturer / Researcher	15	16%
Program Management / Implementation	11	12%
Allied Health	11	12%
Midwife / Nurse	6	6%
Government Official	3	3%
Social scientists / Social Worker	3	3%
Student - Nursing /Midwifery / Medical	2	2%
Human right / SRHR advocate	1	1%
Others	1	1%
Total	93	100%

Table 5: Distribution of participants by type of organization

Organization type	No. of participants	%
Government organizations	26	28%
International NGOs	16	17%
International organizations	12	13%
Academic sectors	11	12%
Non-government Hospitals / Clinics / Medical offices	10	11%
Government Hospitals / Clinics / Medical offices	8	9%
Private organizations	4	4%
Local NGOs	3	3%
Others	3	3%
Total	93	100%

Recruitment of participants

Participants became aware of the course in the following ways:

- Promotion of the course by the local coordinators of the GFMER in the countries and regions concerned.
- Promotion of the course on the GFMER website and on partner websites.
- Mobilization of the GFMER and WHO networks. These include WHO regional/country offices, local and international NGOs, WHO collaborating centers at the country level, health ministries, and universities.

Selection of participants

Participants were selected on the basis of the application form and the documents provided.

Sponsored participants were nominated by their institutions or other organizations. The participants or their employers were then contacted by our Geneva team. The list of candidates was sent to the country coordinators/tutors, who also contacted the candidates.

Teachers, partner institutions

Teachers from WHO, Oxford University and GFMER, as well as other national and international institutions, were involved in teaching and tutoring the online course.

Coaching

<https://www.gfmer.ch/2024-courses/research-methodology/tutors.htm>

A total of 11 coaches from 10 countries were assigned to the 93 participants in their countries or nearby countries during the course. The coaches' responsibilities were to:

1. collect, review and comment on participants' assignments,
2. guide participants through the development of their research protocols,
3. review and provide feedback on the research protocols developed by the students and answer any technical questions in relation to the course.

Coaches motivated and interacted with their participants through various means including email, WhatsApp, phone calls, Zoom meetings and Webinars.

Teaching methods

Teaching methods consisted of on-line lectures (video recordings, didactic presentations), key readings, reading materials, additional references and referrals to related websites. Live webinars to teach and to respond to participants' questions were organized.

For each module, participants received assignments with very precise instructions. The students also developed a research protocol on a topic related to their area of practice. Guides were provided to help the participants prepare their assignments and research protocols. Tutors and coordinators revised the assignments and research protocols using the assignment marking guides provided and communicated feedback to students. The goal was to enhance participants' knowledge of research methodology and how to develop research protocols and to improve their scientific writing.

The participation of a student was measured by the submission of assignments and the research protocol in the time given. A student whose work is completed, reviewed, and accepted for all the modules including the submission of a research protocol is credited with a total of 60 hours, irrespective of the actual time taken to complete the work. At the end of the course, the student received a certificate signed by the organizing institutions.

To support the participants, different mechanisms of communication and interaction (Facebook, Google Groups, WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, Zoom) were used.

Clinical training, prevention and treatment of obstetric fistula

<http://www.gfmer.ch/fistula/index.htm>



General

The GFMER 2024 obstetric fistula program focused on surgical training workshops, free patient care, training, clinical supervision scholarships, material support, and new partnerships.

In reality, this program extends far beyond the management of obstetric fistulas; it also encompasses a range of other conditions, including urogenital prolapses, male urethral strictures, and various other urological disorders. Our contribution in terms of equipment also includes operative endoscopy and laparoscopy, the latter of which was introduced at Tanguiéta Hospital in 2023.

Country activities

Benin

https://fistula-group.ch/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/240328_ENG_LOW_rapport-mission-Benin-copie.pdf

2 surgical workshops in April and November, enabling 73 cases of obstetric fistulas and prolapses and 10 cases of urethral stenosis in men to be operated on. The workshops were coordinated by Dr. Renaud AHOLOU, Chief Physician at Hôpital Saint Jean de Dieu and Maternity Ward Director, and Dr. René GAYITO, Head of General Surgery.

Capsule 1 - Fistula Group's February 2024 mission to Tanguiéta (<https://fistula-group.ch/capsule-1-mission-fevrier-2024-de-fistula-group-a-tanguieta/>)

Capsule 2 - Fistula Group's February 2024 mission to Tanguiéta (<https://fistula-group.ch/capsule-2-mission-fevrier-2024-de-fistula-group-a-tanguieta-2/>)

Capsule 3 - Fistula Group's February 2024 mission to Tanguiéta (<https://fistula-group.ch/capsule-3-mission-fevrier-2024-de-fistula-group-a-tanguieta/>)

Capsule 4 - Fistula Group's February 2024 mission to Tanguiéta (<https://fistula-group.ch/capsule-4-mission-fevrier-2024-de-fistula-group-a-tanguieta/>)

Cameroon

2 surgical workshops were held in April and September under the direction of Professor Pierre Marie TEBEU, enabling 21 cases to be operated on.

Burkina Faso

The surgeries were performed at Sainte Camille Hospital by Dr. Moussa GUIRO, sometimes as part of routine procedures and other times during short surgical campaigns. In total, 114 cases were successfully operated on in 2024.

Madagascar

<https://www.gfmer.ch/fistula/pdf/mission-report-toliara-madagascar-2024.pdf>

Prof. ROCHAT went to Toliara in November for a training workshop (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtiDe_1JbZM), which enabled 19 patients to be operated on. 227 patients underwent surgery as part of missions coordinated directly or transversally by the Fistula group.

Training and clinical supervision grants

GFMER was able to provide specialization grants to 4 doctors (3 urologists and a gynecologist) and, above all, clinical supervision grants to all specialist doctors at Tanguiéta Hospital. Most of these doctors have already benefited from GFMER support during their 6 years of specialization. The training and clinical supervision grants enable us to support young doctors in their specialist training and provide them with satisfactory framework conditions so that, once trained, they can continue to practice in the facilities where we operate. In Benin, for example, the Tanguiéta Hospital is located 600 km north of Cotonou and 60 km from the border with Burkina Faso, which has been closed for the past 4 years due to insecurity caused by jihadists.

Support for the Holistic program

Fistula group is committed to the Holistic program, which aims to make Labé, Guinea Conakry, a certified reference center for managing obstetric fistulas.

Equipment support

For Benin, the aim is to maintain the technical platform developed by GFMER in endoscopic and laparoscopic surgery. A significant investment in 2024 will involve the complete renovation of the clinic's building. This will provide a high-quality facility for patients who can contribute financially to their hospitalization and come from afar to be operated on by specialist doctors.

For Madagascar, we donated a new operating table to the Toliara Hospital.

Scientific activities Prof. Charles-Henry Rochat

In May 2024, Prof. C. H. ROCHAT attended the congress of the Association Sénégalaise d'Urologie in Dakar, where he gave presentations on obstetric fistulas and prostate cancer.

Publications

Prof. Charles-Henry RoCHAT's Contributions in 2024 to Humanitarian Medicine

Fouelefack, A.-G.T. et al. (The Journal of Medical Research 2024; 10(2):61-63). "Urethroplasty at St. Jean de Dieu Hospital in Tanguiéta: A Review of 17 Cases."

Conference Participation

May 16-18, 2024: Senegalese Urological Association of Dakar – Presentation of several topics, including:

- African Collaboration on Obstetric Fistulas: 30 Years of Experience
- Evolution of Indications and Outcomes for Robot-Assisted Prostatectomy
- Minimally Invasive Surgery for Iatrogenic Vesicovaginal Fistulas with Robotics

Book

On International Obstetric Fistula Day, May 23, 2024, GFMER/Fistula Group organized the launch of the book *Revivre* by Charles-Henry ROCHAT and Nicolas CLEUET (<https://fistula-group.ch/jeudi-23-mai-vernissage-de-revivre/>). Above all, it's a book of photos illustrating the lives of women suffering from obstetric fistula and showing the commitment of those who care for them (<https://www.instagram.com/p/C7U20-NtBZm/>).

Nomination

In 2024, Charles-Henry ROCHAT was appointed Associate Professor at CIESPAC (Inter-State Center for Higher Education in Public Health of Central Africa). (https://www.gfmer.ch/Medical_education_En/Rochat.htm).

Donors

This obstetric fistula program/Fistula Group (<https://fistula-group.ch/>) is explicitly supported by several foundations sympathetic to this cause and by friends loyal to Prof. ROCHAT for many years and who are private donors. Among the foundations that support us are the INSPIR' and Carigest Foundations for training and clinical fellowships, the Topaze Foundation for the work of Swiss surgeons in the field, the Alfred and Eugénie Baur, Rumsey-Cartier, Pharos Trust, and FRTM Foundations for the various surgical workshops. Without the support of these foundations and private donors, this program could not exist.

Perspective for 2025

We will continue to operate in the countries mentioned in this report (Benin, Cameroon, Burkina Faso, and Madagascar), as well as possibly in Chad, as part of the partnership signed with CIESPAC. In Benin, we hope to continue our partnership with the Claudine Tallon Foundation for patient recruitment and social reintegration in conjunction with the Ministry of Health. Our partner remains SALFA for Madagascar, but we are open to other collaborations.

Our "Obstetric Fistula" online course has recently been reformatted. We will try to promote it at the International Federation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (FIGO) congress in South Africa in October 2025 (Prof. ROCHAT is a board member of the FIGO Fistula Committee).

We will continue to support the Holistic project to develop a referral center for obstetric fistulas in Guinea Conakry.

GFMER collaborative activities with Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute (OMPHI)

About the collaboration: <https://intergrowth21.com/geneva-foundation-medical-education-and-research>

List of modules: <https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/index.htm>

The evidence-based management of Pre-eclampsia and Eclampsia

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/preeclampsia-eclampsia/index.htm>

This is the first online training course developed by OMPHI and GFMER in June 2011 available in Spanish and English. In 2023, the course was updated and is available in English.

Till December 2024, a total of 4148 health professionals from 120 countries have successfully completed the training and knowledge assessment and have been awarded certificates.

The evidence-based management of postpartum haemorrhage

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/pph/index.htm>

This course is available in English, Spanish and Russian. Its dissemination continued during 2024. Since its launch in June 2013 till December 2024, a total of 3705 health professionals from 128 countries have successfully completed the training and knowledge assessment and have been awarded certificates.

Maternal infections

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/maternal-infections/index.htm>

This course is available in English. The dissemination of the module continued during 2024. Since the launch of the module in June 2015, up to 2410 health professionals from up to 90 countries have successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

Obstetric fistula

<https://www.gfmer.ch/fistula/obstetric-fistula-2024.htm>

The fistula module dissemination continued in 2024. The module was launched in July 2015 in English and French. In October 2024, the English version was updated. New questionnaire and feedback survey were introduced for research purpose. Since the launch of the module till December 2024, a total of 1706 health professionals from up to 90 countries have successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

INTERGROWTH-21st

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/intergrowth-course/index.htm>

The INTERGROWTH-21st course on maternal, fetal and newborn growth monitoring communicates the methodology of maternal, fetal and newborn growth monitoring and the application of the INTERGROWTH-21st international growth standards to make judgement about appropriateness of growth.

The first module launched in June 2016 “Assessing newborn size by anthropometry” is available in English, Portuguese, Spanish and Italian. The second module “Assessing maternal anthropometry and weight gain during pregnancy” was launched in January 2017 and is available in English and Italian.

The dissemination of the modules continued in 2024. Till date, up to 10289 health professionals from up to 195 countries have successfully completed the knowledge assessment for one or two of the modules and were awarded certificates.

INTERPRACTICE-21st

<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index.htm>

The INTERPRACTICE-21st Project promotes the optimal postnatal growth of preterm infants and standardized growth measurement in selected populations around the world. It is based on the implementation of the INTERGROWTH-21st international standards for preterm postnatal growth and evidence-based feeding recommendations based on human milk.

The “Preterm infant feeding and growth monitoring: Implementation of the INTERGROWTH-21st protocol, interactive e-Learning course” was launched in September 2017. Spanish (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-spanish.htm>), Russian (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-russian.htm>), Portuguese (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-portuguese.htm>) and Italian (<https://www.gfmer.ch/omphi/interpractice/index-italian.htm>) versions of the course are available.

The dissemination of the module continued during 2024. Up to 4947 health professionals from up to 127 countries have so far successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

COVID-19 in pregnancy, delivery and the neonatal period

Launched in July 2021, the aim of the course is to provide healthcare providers with evidence-based recommendations for disease prevention and management of pregnant women and their babies during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to reduce the adverse maternal and newborn outcomes. The course is available in English and Spanish.

The dissemination of the module continued in 2024. Till date, up to 1252 health professionals from about 128 countries have successfully completed the knowledge assessment for the module and were awarded certificates.

It is worth mentioning that the above-mentioned modules can also be accessed by Smartphone and tablet. Moreover, a PDF version is also made available for each module to allow for their offline use.

Supporting Women in Science Program – Aga Khan University

In 2022, the joint research project “Supporting Women in Science” was implemented by the Institute for Global Health and Development at the Aga Khan University, Centre for Global Child Health at the Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids), and University of Oxford, with the funding support of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (<https://www.aku.edu/ighd/research-programmes/Pages/supporting-women-in-science.aspx>). All seven courses developed by GFMER for OMPHI are selected by the program as part of the “evidence-based practice” courses to be taken by participants which will include early-career women scientists across South-Central Asia and East Africa.

Course in research methodology, research protocol development and scientific writing partnership

OMPHI participated in organizing this training course in collaboration with GFMER and WHO.

GFMER collaborative activities with WHO and UNESCO

Sexual Health

<https://www.gfmer.ch/sh/index.htm>

This e-learning course on Sexual health developed by GFMER in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNESCO was offered to our online course students and disseminated globally to health professionals, through the GFMER and partners' networks.

This course is available in English since February 2024. Till December 2024, a total of 1123 health professionals from 87 countries have successfully completed the training and knowledge assessment and have been awarded certificates.

E-learning modules – Statistics

E-learning module	Language	Duration	No. of unique participants who successful completed the test
Sexual health	English	February 2024 – December 2024	1123
Pre-eclampsia and eclampsia	English	June 2011 – December 2024	4148
Postpartum haemorrhage	English , Spanish , Russian	June 2013 – December 2024	3705
Maternal infections	English	May 2015 – December 2024	2410
Obstetric fistula	English	July 2015 – December 2024	1706
INTERGROWTH-21st /Assessing newborn size and /Assessing maternal anthropometry and weight gain during pregnancy	English , Italian , Portuguese , Spanish	June 2016 – December 2024	10289
INTERPRACTICE-21st /Assessing preterm infant feeding and growth monitoring	English , Italian , Portuguese , Russian , Spanish	September 2017 – December 2024	4947
COVID-19 in pregnancy, delivery and the neonatal period	English , Spanish	July 2021 – December 2024	1252

GFMER Global Health New Challenges: Online Courses

E-learning public health course on Cancer in the context of Universal Health Coverage (UHC); Emergency and Surgical Care in UHC; and GFMER collation of specific WHO online courses on COVID-19.

<https://www.gfmer.ch/surgery/cancer.htm>

[Research](#) was coordinated by the GFMER in collaboration with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Centre, USA, on Global community perception of 'surgical care' as a public health issue. This cross-sectional survey was completed by 1954 respondents from 118 countries. It showed that there is still a widespread gap in awareness on the importance of surgical care as a public health issue. This led to the development of GFMER online public health courses to address the gap.

<https://www.gfmer.ch/surgery/research.htm>

The GFMER Global Health New Challenges Online Courses program aims to disseminate knowledge on global health topics through developing online courses and research in collaboration with [experts](#) from the academia, World Health Organization (WHO) and International Scientific Organizations.

These online public health courses create awareness on global public health issues and promote education through highlighting key messages from evidence-based publications specifically WHO for an easy understanding of the impact of the global burden of diseases and policies addressing them.

The following courses are available through the GFMER digital platform: [Cancer in the context of UHC](#); [Emergency and Surgical Care in UHC](#); GFMER collation of specific [WHO online courses on COVID-19](#);

These courses provide health professionals with knowledge and skills to address challenges with evidence-based solutions to global health issues towards UHC. In addition, it creates an interest by several academic partners for collaborations to further explore topics on Global Health New Challenges online courses and include them in their outreach education and training programs by sponsoring participants from low- and middle- income countries (LMICs).

Cambodia support: GFMER partner the Health Volunteer Overseas in USA enabled 67 doctors in their outreach training program in Cambodia to complete the course on Emergency and Surgical Care in UHC and successfully scored above 70% to obtain a certificate.

The GFMER Global Health New Challenges program is overseen by [Dr Meena Nathan Cherian](#) with the following collaborative activities with partners in 2024:

E-learning public health course on Cancer in the Context of Universal Health Coverage

This course provides evidence-based knowledge and experiences from the field for decision-making to engage and prioritize policy issues at all levels of healthcare on cancer in the context of UHC.

This course highlights the following:

- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 targets towards achieving UHC by ensuring equitable access to cancer care to everyone when needed; and

- the burden of cancer can be reduced with an integrated people-centered care with a multidisciplinary approach.

It was developed in partnerships with academic [experts](#) and over 90 reviewers with the aim of providing knowledge in the following areas:

- Public health implications of the unmet need for access to safe and quality cancer care.
- Public health solutions to strengthen cancer management with a multidisciplinary approach at all levels of healthcare.
- Policies for an integrated people-centered cancer care including strengthening surgical systems towards achieving UHC.

Target audience are health professionals, project planners and managers, students (medical, nursing, allied health sciences, public health), and anyone interested in public health.

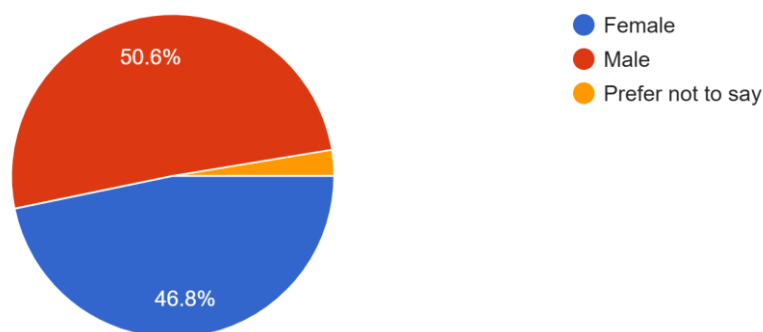
It takes approximately one hour to complete at one's own pace and contains three modules:

1. Global burden of cancer.
2. Integrated cancer care.
3. UHC policies for cancer: strengthening surgical cancer services.

It is a free online course with mandatory registration. A certificate is provided after completion of the course, a short assignment and MCQ test (before and after the course, which allows evaluation of the knowledge gained). To date 77 participants from 31 countries have registered.

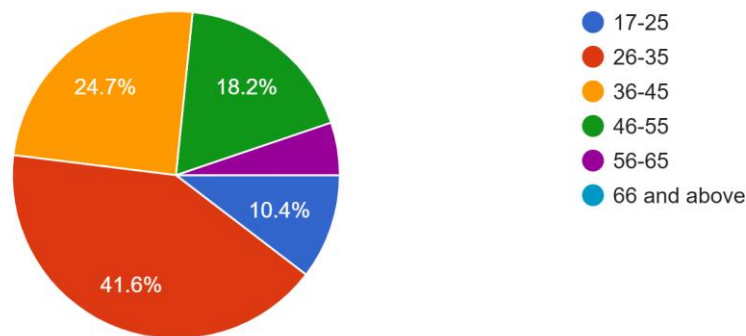
Gender

77 responses



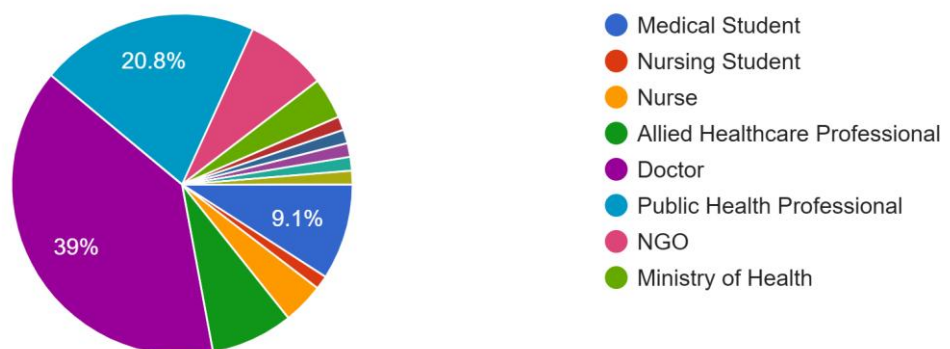
Age in Years

77 responses



Which of the following closely matches your profile or affiliation? (check one)

77 responses



E-learning public health course on Emergency and Surgical Care in UHC

This course gives an understanding of timely safe surgical care services in reaching the SDGs 3.

The course highlights the following:

- Five billion people lack access to basic life-saving surgical care, and it is still not considered as a priority in the field of public health globally and in the national health plans.
- Timely access to lifesaving and disability-preventing emergency and surgical care services are crucial in the entire life-course from birth to old age (in pregnancy-related complications, trauma, congenital anomalies, cancer, abdominal conditions, disasters).

It was developed with experts and over 100 reviewers from published resources of the WHO, Lancet Global Surgery, Disease Control Priorities (3rd edition), International Committee of the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières, with the following learning objectives to:

- understand the implications of the unmet needs for timely access to safe and quality surgical care services within health systems,
- identify public health solutions to surgical care crisis at all levels of healthcare, including humanitarian crises, and
- understand ways to strengthen surgical care systems towards achieving UHC.

Target audience is anyone interested in public health including surgical care services in maternal and child health, noncommunicable and communicable diseases, and humanitarian crises.

It takes approximately four hours to complete at one's own pace with four modules:

1. Global Impact of surgical (sexual & reproductive, injuries, anesthesia) care.
2. Surgical care in humanitarian crisis.
3. Quality and safety in surgical (sexual & reproductive, injuries, anesthesia) care for UHC.
4. The crucial role of surgical care in the context of UHC.

It is free online with a mandatory registration and MCQ test which allows self-evaluation and learning progress. Participants can upgrade (with a fee which was reduced due to the challenging times of COVID-19 Pandemic) in order to obtain a certificate which includes 4 CPD credits approved by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, following an MCQ test (repeated until 70% score) and a short assignment.

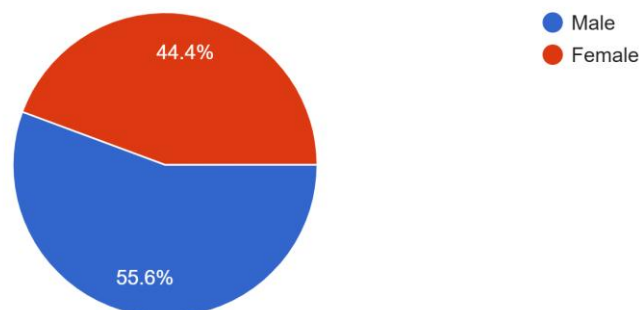
It is aimed at engaging people interested in:

- apply evidence-based knowledge for influencing decision-making in policies.
- advocate as a public health issue on a global platform.

To date 1682 participants of diverse disciplines from over 95 countries have registered (graphs below). The outcome of this course has thus far been successful based on the response received from participants who have asked for additional information on surgical care's role as a public health issue.

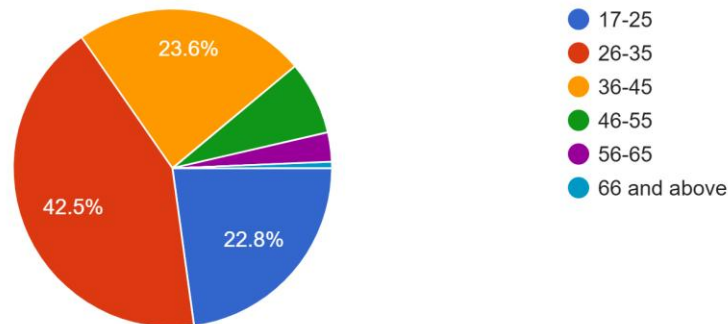
Gender

1,682 responses



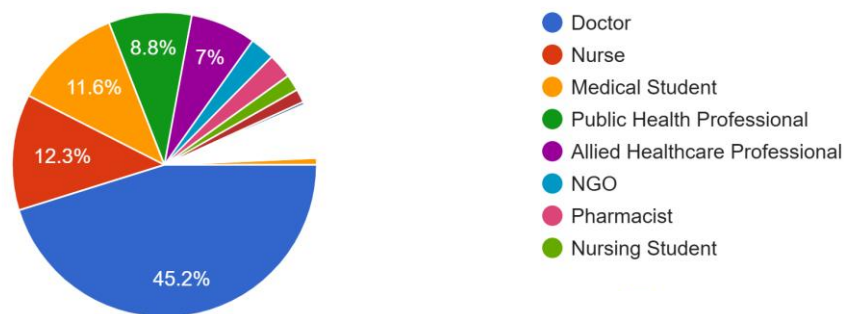
Age in years

1,682 responses



Which of the following closely matches your profile or affiliation? (check one)

1,682 responses



WHO online COVID-19 courses

Collaborations with WHO Global Learning Open courses added open access COVID-19 courses on GFMER Global Health webpage for a wider outreach.

Research and Publications of GFMER Global Health New Challenges with Institutional partnerships

<https://www.gfmer.ch/surgery/research.htm>

- Book 'Principles of Perioperative Safety and Efficiency'. Book Chapter on Principles of Perioperative Safety and Quality on the Global Stage. GFMER Meena Nathan Cherian June 2024. [Principles of Perioperative Safety and Efficiency | SpringerLink](#)
- WHO Global Patient Safety Report 2024: GFMER Meena Nathan Cherian External Reviewer. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240095458#:~:text=Global%20Patient%20Safety%20Report%202024%20report%20presents%20a,across%20the%20world%2C%20specific%20regions%20and%20individual%20countries>. [Global patient safety report 2024](#)

- The World Health Organization and Neurosurgery. In: Germano, I.M. (eds) Neurosurgery and Global Health. Springer, Cham. 2022. GFMER Meena Nathan Cherian. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-86656-3_23.
- Editing and reviewing the new edition of the WHO Manual Surgical Care at the District Hospital. Nov.2023-2024 ongoing.
- Book chapter: Remote Healthcare Around the World: E Health. 2023-2024 ongoing.
- Cancer Control Publication for London Cancer Control Week. UK, GFMER Team Comment Meena Nathan Cherian; Jyotsna Agarwal: 'Gaps in health systems became evident globally during the COVID-19 pandemic affecting cancer services hugely despite existing national policies on noncommunicable diseases and essential health services. Empowering communities to demand investments in cancer management in national and district health plans is crucial. GFMER provided free short online public health education on challenges in LMICs, causing one death due to cancer every five seconds, and guiding implementation of evidence-based policy decisions at the grassroot level.' Meena N Cherian and Jyotsna Agarwal. Nov. 2022. <http://www.cancercontrol.info/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/cc2022.pdf> User-centred innovation to advance safe surgery at the point of need: report on development of the SurgiField system. BMJ Innovations. 2022; 0:1–6. doi:10.1136/bmjinnov-2021-000893.
- Global Competency and Outcomes Framework for Universal Health Coverage. WHO. 2022. <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/352711/9789240034662-eng.pdf?sequence=1>
- Fake-news-free evidence-based communication for proper vein-lymphatic disease management. Int Angiol. 2023 Apr;42(2):89-189. doi: 10.23736/S0392-9590.23.05044-7. Epub 2023 Mar 17. PMID: 36930179.

Partnership/Collaborations/Consultations with GFMER Global Health New Challenges

- WHO Global Patient Safety Consultations. Jan 2024
- HIFA mHealth Innovative Research on Civil society's evidence-generating role for health policy Consultations. May 2024.
- WHO Consultation on Post Pregnancy Family Planning: GFMER Global Health New Challenges contributed to the discussions and provided four comments: i. culture environment gender bias male foetus; ii. education awareness tools, online courses iii. training of health providers iv. safe perioperative care (surgical, obstetrics, anaesthesia services). June 2024.
- Research consultations to study patients knowledge of anaesthesia and their perception of participation in their own perioperative safety. Jan 2024.
- Health for All (HIFA) mHealth Innovate Consultations: research on use of mobile technology. Sept. 2024.
- WONCA eHealth Webinar on Telemedicine and Telehealth: Transforming Healthcare in the Digital Age. June 2024.
- WHO EURO Mini-Conference. Population Health Management: Harnessing the Power of Data to Strengthen PHC. GFMER provided comments i. Emphasis to involve clinical care provides with public health. ii. Should include training of PHC providers which is crucial to address equity in access to quality health services. iii Population Health Management will not be possible unless 'data' systems are supported through 'behavioural change' resulting in 'population cultural change'.
- European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies Webinar: Health and health system effects on poverty. Co-benefits from health and health systems to education. Oct.2024.
- WHO webinar One Health education: prepare the workforce for effective implementation. Nov. 2024.

- World Health Innovation Summit. Nov. 2024.
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Humanitarian Crises, ELRHA Study: SRHR Experts Regional Meeting Priority Research Questions. Nov. 2024.
- Health Information For All (HIFA) Supporting Organisations (SOs) Meeting. GFMER Meena Nathan Cherian Coordinated the Discussion forum; GFMER is HIFA SO. Nov. 2024
- Joint Intersession WHO meeting of Policy Coordination Committee (PCC), STAG, GAP and the AAB. Dec. 2024.
- SurgiBox Inc is a Collaborating Partner of GFMER. It is an innovative medical technology with the mission to make surgery safer globally. It consists of a sterile inflatable SurgiBubble with a High Efficiency Particulate Air filtered air and operated by a battery providing an operating room anywhere in the world. 'SurgiBox Usability Global Surgery Workshop' was held at the Utah University (UU) Hospital, the UU Children's Hospital, and the UU Intermountain Education Centre, USA. March 2022.
- WHO Policy Coordination Committee (PCC) Human Reproduction Program (HRP) 'Gender and Human Rights Issue Sexual and Reproductive Health.' During the three-day online meeting discussions allowed participants to add comments, therefore, the GFMER's interest in education and training courses was highlighted in the comment section. Geneva, Switzerland. May 2022.
- World Congress on Phlebology. Closing Remarks by GFMER for the Education Working Group. Dubai. Sept.2022
- Talk Global Action SIOG: Communicating Cancer Research for Evidence-informed Policy Decisions to reduce inequities in Cancer Care to Older Adults, at the United Nations-International Society of Geriatric Oncology (SIOG)-Policy Meeting United Nations Palais, Geneva, Switzerland. Oct.2022.

GFMER Global Health New Challenges representation in global conferences/meetings and education programs

GFMER Global Health New Challenges Program participated in the following meetings including some in collaboration with GFMER partners:

- Engender Health Interactive Webinar: Safe Surg. Ecosystem: Marching Toward 2030: May 2024.
- Cochrane People, Health Systems and Public Health Thematic Group. Webinar on Does co-production of a Cochrane Review facilitate the translation of findings into practice? Aug 2024.
- Cochrane Webinar E-SCOPE: A Model for Identifying & Accelerating Implementation of Evidence-Based Best Practices. Aug 2024.
- Guest Lecture Unite Scientific Aging International Conference. Rome, Italy. June 2023.
- Guest Lecture. International Cancer Congress Sept. Rome Italy. Sept 2023.
- Meeting of the Policy and Coordination Committee (PCC) of the UNDP / UNFPA / UNICEF / WHO / World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction. Geneva, Switzerland. April 2023.
- WHO UN Decade of Healthy Ageing. UN Palais Geneva, Switzerland. Nov 2023.
- Expert Panel Consultations of Health Information For All (HIFA, partners of GFMER) Discussion Forum Tobacco: To enable inclusion of community participation in policies. March 2023.
- HRP Joint PCC Intersession Meeting STAG, GAP, WHO. Geneva, Switzerland Nov 2023.
- HIFA: Strengthening primary health care in a decentralized health system. Participation: Q1 Digital Technology to empower Older Ageing Pop. Q2 Alliance/opposition from Private Health Sectors. 13 Oct.

- International Federation Alliance Global Café Meeting Discussion on: How can we have collaborations/programs for Health Education for Older Adults? Oct 2023.
- International College of Surgeons – European Federation Meeting, Geneva, Switzerland. May 2023.
- Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland Global Surgery Chair Selection Panel. Aug 2022.
- Keynote Lecture on ‘How can we prioritise an early interest in academic publications?’ at the Webinar on ‘Research Publications’ by D. Y. Patil University Medical College, Hospital and Research Centre in collaboration with the United Nations Association of the USA, and GFMER. India. Sept 2022.

Sexual and reproductive rights

<https://www.gfmer.ch/srr/index.htm>

In order to achieve sexual and reproductive health, people need to know their sexual and reproductive rights. The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research (GFMER) therefore sees a close relationship between sexual and reproductive health on the one hand and the legal and political system on the other. For these reasons, the Foundation created a dedicated website on Sexual and Reproductive Rights. Since its establishment in 2002, GFMER has exchanged sexual and reproductive health expertise with governmental and non-governmental organizations all over the world. GFMER has become a resource center for training and research in human sexuality and reproduction, creating a vast network of health professionals in developing and developed countries.

With this website GFMER seeks to contribute to a meaningful inclusion of human rights in sexual and reproductive health issues.

Content of the sexual and reproductive rights website:

- Introductions to major sexual and reproductive rights topics.
- Regularly updated summaries of national legislations for the major areas of sexual and reproductive health.
- Selected publications on legislation and ethical issues in sexual and reproductive health.

Course coordinators at country level

<https://www.gfmer.ch/country-coordinators/GFMER-country-coordinators.htm>



Afghanistan



Bolivia



Cameroon



Egypt



Gulf Cooperation Council



Iran



Lebanon



Mexico



Mozambique



Pakistan



Turkey



Bangladesh



Brazil



Colombia



Ethiopia



India



Iraq



Malawi



Mongolia



Nepal



Sudan



Uganda



Bhutan



Burkina Faso



Ecuador



Georgia



Indonesia



Kenya



MENA Region



Morocco



Nigeria



Togo



Zambia

GFMER has appointed a total of 33 coordinators in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Columbia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ethiopia, Georgia, Gulf Cooperation Council, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Malawi, MENA Region, Mexico, Mongolia, Mozambique, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Sudan, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, and Zambia.

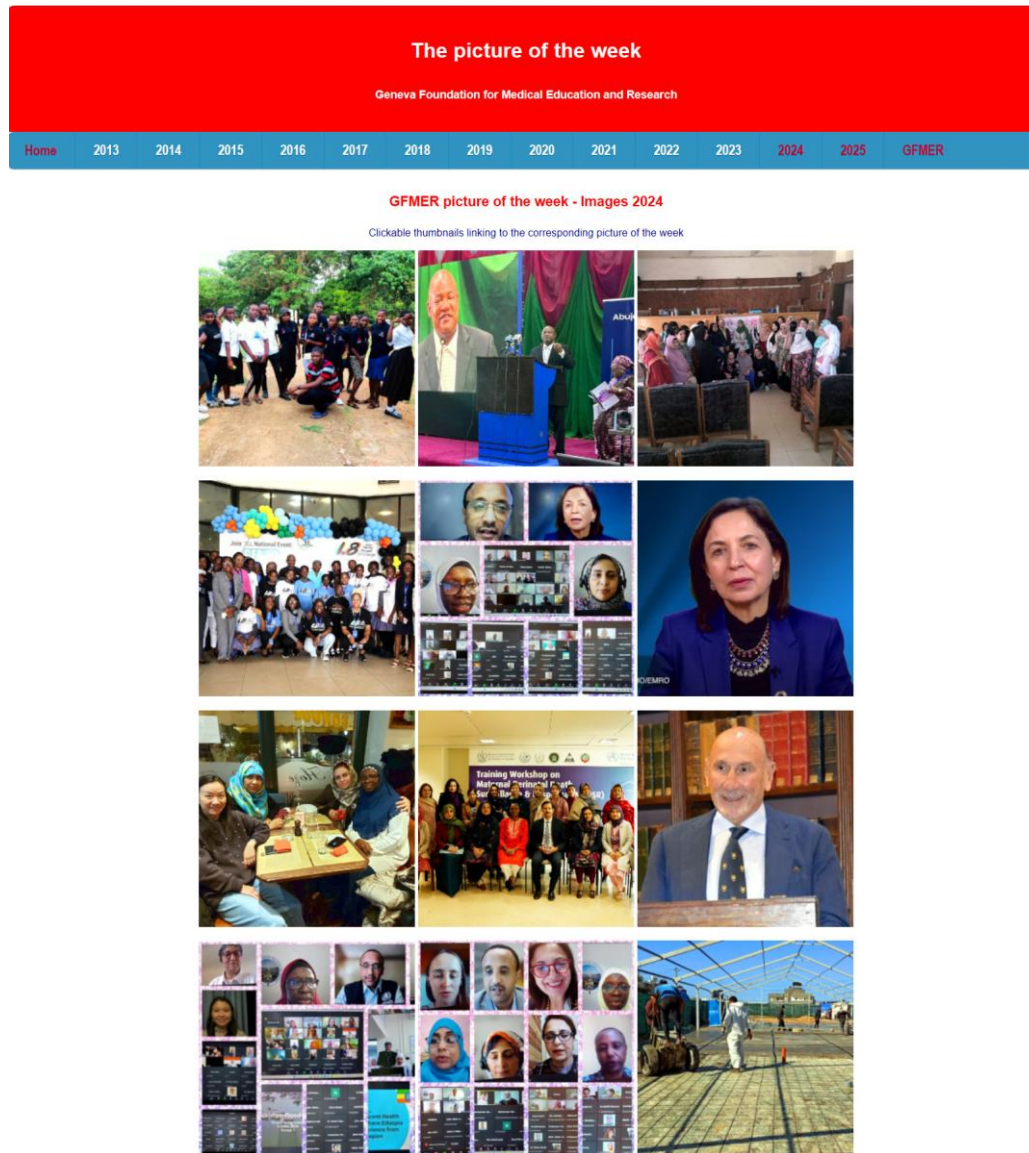
The main tasks of country coordinators consist of:

- Student coaching at a local level, i.e., helping the students to access the teaching material and learning methods. As the majority of students' work (assignments and research protocol) is based on the analysis of local situations in regard to sexual and reproductive health problems, the local coordinators can offer the appropriate assistance to the students.
- Ensure communication with the course organizers and students.
- Advertise the course to various local training and research institutions.
- Recruit eligible candidates for the course.
- Create a network between students from the same country.
- Organize if possible some meetings with students from the same country.
- Identify potential sponsors to provide scholarships for students. It is worth mentioning that the majority of institutions allocate funds for their human resource capacity building programs.

Picture of the week

<https://www.gfmer.ch/gfmervoices/pictureoftheweek-2024.htm>

We have created a section on our website entitled “Picture of the week”. Each week, we publish the photo of a student showing their professional activities in a treatment facility, in a refugee camp, on site, in class, etc. This initiative has proved to be very gratifying for our students. It emphasizes the importance of distance training for health professionals where access to training is sometimes limited. It also shows the application of knowledge acquired by our students in their professional practice.



Participation in the 36th meeting of the HRP Policy and Coordination Committee

GFMER participated as an observer in the 37th meeting of the Policy and Coordination Committee (PCC) of the UNDP-UNFPA-UNICEF-WHO-World Bank Special Program of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction (HRP). The meeting was held from 15 to 16 April 2024 at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. GFMER was represented by Dr Raqibat Idris, Dr Fariza Rahman and Mrs. Fionna Poon. PCC is the governing body of HRP which is imbedded within WHO's Department of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Research (SRHR). Each year, the PCC meeting provides an opportunity to follow the activities of HRP in the preceding and upcoming years and to meet and discuss with GFMER partners in the SRHR department about ongoing and future collaborations.

Activities planned for 2025

Courses in collaboration with WHO

The Geneva Foundation for Medical Education and Research in collaboration with the World Health Organization and other partners will continue to offer a series of online training courses in the field of sexual and reproductive health and research in 2025 as follows:

- Adolescent sexual and reproductive health
 - « Cours en santé sexuelle et reproductive des adolescents », targeting Francophone West, Central and North Africa
 - Global version
- Family planning in English and French versions
- Research methodology, research protocol development and scientific writing

GFMER collaborative activities with Ipas

To develop and disseminate an 8-week e-learning course “Avortement sécurisé et continuum des DSSR” based on the World Health Organization (WHO) and other relevant regional guidelines and resources, and in partnership with the ODAS Center of Ipas.

The aim of the course is to build the capacity of young people and youth organizations on key themes and issues related to work on safe abortion. The tentative schedule for the course is May 2025.

GFMER collaborative activities with Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute

1. Dissemination of e-learning modules

GFMER will continue to disseminate all e-learning modules through its wide and expanding network of health professionals with ongoing monitoring. The possibility of converting the modules into an interactive online training with coaching support will be explored.

2. Translation of the Obstetric fistula module in French

3. Update of e-learning modules

GFMER will propose the update of some existing e-learning modules to its partners as necessary.

4. Training course in collaboration with OMPHI and the University of Antioquia

Comunicar el derecho a la salud de las poblaciones: derechos sexuales y reproductivos (Spanish).