



# FEMALE GLOBAL SCHOLARS NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER 2022 | ISSUE 3



## FACULTY FEATURE

### **Dr. Myung Hee Lee (PhD) - Assistant Professor of Statistics**

“I received my Ph.D. in Statistics from University of North Carolina Chapel Hill in 2007. As part of my Ph.D. dissertation, I was working at the cancer center aiming to identify unknown microarray cancer subtypes. After the completion of my Ph.D., I stayed at the cancer center as a post doc for a year and joined Colorado State University as a Statistics faculty member and continued working on methodology development for the analysis of high dimensional low sample data.



However, at the end of my appointment at CSU, I was struggling to motivate myself. I found it difficult to prove to myself that the methodology developed was useful and impactful, I wanted to do something that I thought was more clinically relevant. I joined Weill Cornell Medicine as an Assistant professor in the Fall of 2015 conducting independent statistical research and collaborating with clinical investigators at the Center for Global Health.”

#### **What led you to become a statistician and how did you become interested in global health?**

“I think Statistics and Global Health are two very separate degrees. From a very young age, I was always drawn into mathematics. I remember when people used to ask me what I wanted to be when I grow up, I was always quick to respond, ‘a mathematician’. I thought that doing mathematics all day long was going to be fun. When I got to college, I had the opportunity to choose from a range of majors within the mathematics department, and I thoroughly enjoyed learning statistics. I was always fascinated by mathematic and the analytical thinking behind statistics. That is how I became a statistician. As for global health, that was a little random for me, in college, I wasn’t really drawn to biology or anatomy. But I think what motivates me in global health is that I can think of the problem abstractly and I am able to see the application side of things with global health.”

## How do you stay focused when analyzing large sets of data?

"I definitely struggle, but collaborating with clinical investigators that are passionate about their project really helps me focus on analyzing large data sets. Working with collaborators that have a shared interest in the project is a major driver for me. With this, I aim to find statistical methods I have under my belt to analyze the data. I have realized too that if I focus on the same project for many years, it does get very hard to stay focused. I enjoy the fact that I get to dive into something different based on the different collaborators and their projects; it can be challenging sometimes, but it is fun."

## How would you communicate your data insights to audiences who lack a strong background in statistics?

"When I'm teaching my philosophy is that I want the students to have a different picture of statistics from when they come into the classroom and when they walk out. If there is no difference when they walk-out, then I think that is not good teaching. I try and make sure that I put terms and concepts on their levels. I have found that visualization is a strong tool to get students to understand concepts. When the audience gets to see what is happening, it feels less daunting."

## What is the greatest challenge you have faced in your career?

"For me, keeping the balance between collaborative work but also finding time to invest in statistical work, and ensuring that I am on top of my game with statistics. The Center has been such a great support in navigating this challenge which I appreciate."

## What motivates you the most?

"I think being a mom to my two sons is my biggest motivator. In whatever I do I want to be a better person; I want to be someone that inspires my kids."



Myung Hee with her husband and two boys at the Real Madrid soccer Stadium in May 2022.

## SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT

### Claudia Thomas Riché (RN, MSc)

is the Executive Director and co-founder of **NECH-CIEH**, a collaborative education network for nurses. Ms. Thomas Riché is also a nurse consultant at the GHEKIO Centers Training Unit and holds a master's degree in nursing science from University of Montreal, Canada. In 2019, she was named an **Ashoka Fellow**, a lifetime award, which establishes her as part of a community of social innovators. Claudia was recently selected to be a **Vital Voices Visionaries** fellow in September 2022.



### Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

"I am Claudia Thomas. I was born in Haiti and moved to Montreal, Canada when I was five and half years old, my mom worked as a nurse and my father as a teacher. When it was my time to find my way to college, I wanted to study medicine, but it was difficult for my parents to help fund my medical school education. I was so passionate about medical school; I remember telling my mom I wanted to enroll in a medical school in Mexico. She was worried about me being a young girl, living alone in Mexico, so she encouraged me to pursue nursing instead. I remember vividly telling her that "okay, because I'm going to pursue nursing, I don't just want to be just a regular nurse, I want to go very far." After completing nursing school at Montreal University, I worked as a nurse in Montreal from 1988-2003. In 2004, I moved to Haiti and have been working with the Haitian Group for the Study of Kaposi's Sarcoma and Opportunistic Infections (GHESKIO) and have been working there ever since. Dr. Pape always tells us - "you need to have your own project; and when you have your own project, you can move forward with it". With his advice and encouragement, and with my many years of experience working in the field of nursing, I gained the momentum to write a model push for elevating the nursing training program, as well as empowering and strengthening capacity for nurses in Haiti. In 2009, in collaboration with Quisqueya University, Weill Cornell Medicine and GHESKIO, I helped run a nursing program, specializing in infectious diseases. In 2014, I co-founded NECH-CIEH (Nursing Education Collaborative for Haiti - Coopérative des Infirmières en Education pour Haiti) and have been serving as the executive director since 2019. NECH-CIEH is a collaborative network of nurses across Haiti to empower the nursing profession in the community. The goal of this network is to position nurses as health change makers within and beyond the clinic walls, in order to promote better health habits and disease prevention. It really has taken me a long while to get to where I am today, but I know that this is where I am meant to be right now."

### Can you talk about some of the ways that you advocate for women in global health?

"I think that by being part of the female scholar's program and by working with NECH-CIEH towards advancing female nurses have been ways that I advocate for women in health. Whether that be through research, education, journal publications where women are first authors, workshops, and conferences to promote female nurses. Even further, community outreach programs to show people that the role of the nurses is not only at the bedside, but also in the community. For long, I have seen that women generally find it hard to advocate for themselves, we don't push our barriers because we are afraid, so being involved in these programs, helps me advocate for women in health."

### You recently received a Vital Voice Visionaries Fellowship award; can you tell me a little bit about that?

"I think this fellowship is honestly a gift from God! I was not anticipating getting this fellowship, I applied very last minute, but nonetheless, I am so honored to be part of a huge network of change makers. VV Visionaries is a distinguished program with a huge network of global female leaders. This program consists of 7 weeks of fellowship training sessions which include several lectures and breakout rooms which build on our leadership skills. I particularly appreciate that I am able to interact with other fellows - it is so inspiring learning from so many incredible people from different backgrounds, they all have a story to share which is so beautiful."

## Why is women's leadership essential to Global Health?

"Since we were small, we as women learned to do many tasks at once. We were also taught, at least from the culture I grew up in, that men were at the top and women were at the bottom. We have always seen men taking on leadership roles, while women are too often left behind. But it's not meant to be like that, we are meant to be equal -- it's not that women can do things better than men, we have our strengths and weaknesses, and we need to work together to do better. We need to have more visibility of women in healthcare in general. As women we see things differently, we can understand the various struggles women and children face when they walk into the clinic, while men can't see some things that women can."

## What aspects of your career are you most proud of?

"I am most proud of this moment, right now since I've been appointed as the executive director of NECH-CIEH. I am also very proud of the book that I wrote a few years ago when I turned 50, called "Je t'ai aimé, je t'aime et je t'aimerai toujours", which was released in 2019. I wrote this book about myself, about my journey. It is about my dreams and my visions and a compilation of stories of the people that I've met throughout my life. I can confidently say that all of these incredible accomplishments in my career happened when I was ready. I believe that everyone always has the right time."



## Funding Opportunities

- Emerging Global Leader Award (K43) - Due date: December 9th, 2022
- Developmentally Tailored HIV Prevention and Care Research for Adolescents and Young Adults -- Due date: May 2023
- Stigma or Other Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) in HIV Prevention and Treatment -- Due Date: May 2023
- Grand Challenges Grant Opportunities - several opportunities varied due dates

## Webinars

- Let's talk Maternal and Child Health - November 15th, 2022 (FREE webinar)
- Introduction to Research Ethics
- Clinical Trial Protocol Development
- Data Safety Monitoring Boards: Their Place and Role in Trials
- Lessons from COVID-19 and Planning for Future Pandemics

## Miscellaneous

- World Conference on Lung Health 2022 - November 8th - 11th, 2022
- Global Health Center e-learning training courses

