A Universal Curriculum for Global Health
The Bellagio Global Health Education Initiative
June 2015 Executive Summary
Global health is a burgeoning field that has generated a great deal of excitement within clinical medicine and medical education. The unique characteristics of global health, including emphasis on equity, cooperation with other disciplines (e.g., agriculture, engineering) to achieve health outcomes, prevention on a global scale, and the importance of culture in practice, have lead to unique challenges for educators and institutions trying to develop curricula to train medical students in this field. In recent years, there have been several efforts by educators from high-income countries to define how such curricula could be developed, but there remain significant limitations in existing global health curricula with regard to conceptualization of goals and objectives as well as appropriate teaching and evaluation methods, especially for students learning while away from their home institution.

The Bellagio Global Health Education Initiative (BGHEI) was developed in the context of a 2015 meeting sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation on “A Universal Curriculum for Global Health.” The Initiative, composed of faculty, educators, administrators, and trainees who are leaders in global health education, includes representation from 16 institutions and organizations, 10 countries (including high-, middle-, and low-income countries), and 6 continents. The group’s initial efforts were directed toward three key foci: the generation of core and specialist themes for medical student global health education, methods through which these themes could be effectively taught, and student assessment and program evaluation.

Using the nominal group process methodology to ensure that all voices were heard, the BGHEI developed a number of principles to guide global health curriculum development and implementation. These principles, which are further elaborated in the Meeting Summary, include:

- Global health is a field within medical education that must be addressed by all medical schools in high-, middle-, and low-income countries.
- It is possible to identify key global health education themes, and to stratify these themes into core themes (relevant for all students) and specialist themes (relevant for students seeking special expertise).
- Curricular design must distinguish between “home” and “away” sites and account for the unique strengths and opportunities at each site.
- Educators must recognize both formal and hidden curricula when developing programs in global health education.
- Student assessment and program evaluation in global health should emphasize reflection and transformative learning, in addition to more “traditional” areas of learning.

We believe the BGHEI establishes the groundwork for a universal curriculum for global health and challenges educators and institutional participants to rethink traditional concepts. Global health curriculum development will also have fundamental implications for the clinical curriculum as a whole. The BGHEI intends to continue to promote the development of high-quality global health curricula through ongoing collaboration.