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Global Health Alumni Newsletter

YORK U'S GLOBAL HEALTH ALUMNI NETWORK

✦

September 2025








DR. GODFRED O. BOATENG

Dear Global Health Alumni,

Welcome to the second issue of the Global Health Alumni Network newsletter! We are deeply thankful for the enthusiastic and positive response we received after our inaugural edition. Your engagement and feedback have been pivotal in shaping the vision of this platform. As the leader of the YorkU Global Health Alumni community, I take great pride in the vibrant network we are cultivating together—a network that not only honors the remarkable achievements of our graduates but also fosters meaningful connections across the ever-evolving field of Global Health.

This edition is dedicated to celebrating the inspiring and diverse journeys of our Global Health alumni. Each story shared highlights the myriad ways in which a Global Health degree can unlock doors to fulfilling and impactful career paths, spanning a variety of sectors, roles, and corners of the globe. From policy-making and research to frontline health initiatives and global advocacy, our alumni consistently exemplify the depth and versatility of this field. Your invaluable feedback has guided us in showcasing experiences that reflect the rich tapestry of opportunities available to Global Health graduates. Our aspiration is not only to spotlight these accomplishments but also to inspire, inform, and connect members of our community as they forge their professional journeys.

A heartfelt welcome to our newest graduates who are joining the Global Health Alumni Network! Events such as the Global Health Class of 2025 Celebration mark the beginning of lifelong connections, bringing alumni together to commemorate achievements, cultivate meaningful relationships, and remain engaged with our thriving community.

Thank you for your unwavering support and involvement. Together, we are building a robust and vibrant alumni network—a sanctuary where experiences, insights, and ideas can flourish, enhancing our collective impact in the realm of Global Health.

Warm regards,

Godfred Boateng, PhD
Associate Professor | Canada Research Chair in Global Health and Humanitarianism

Insight on Dr. Godfred Boateng:

Dr. Godfred Boateng is an Associate Professor of Global Health and Director of the Global and Environmental Health Lab at York University. He holds the Canada Research Chair in Global Health and Humanitarianism and is a Faculty Fellow at the Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research. Additionally, he serves as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the Multi-Interprofessional Center for Health Informatics, University of Texas at Arlington.

Dr. Boateng specializes in designing and applying culturally relevant, scalable methodologies to investigate the complex factors influencing health and health equity across various spatial levels—from households to national systems. His transdisciplinary research program explores resource insecurity, sustainable livelihoods, the socio-ecological determinants of cardiometabolic health in aging populations, social inequities in health systems, quantitative analysis methods, survey scale development, and the health impacts of COVID-19. His work has significantly advanced the understanding of social and structural determinants of health among vulnerable populations, particularly women, children, and older adults.

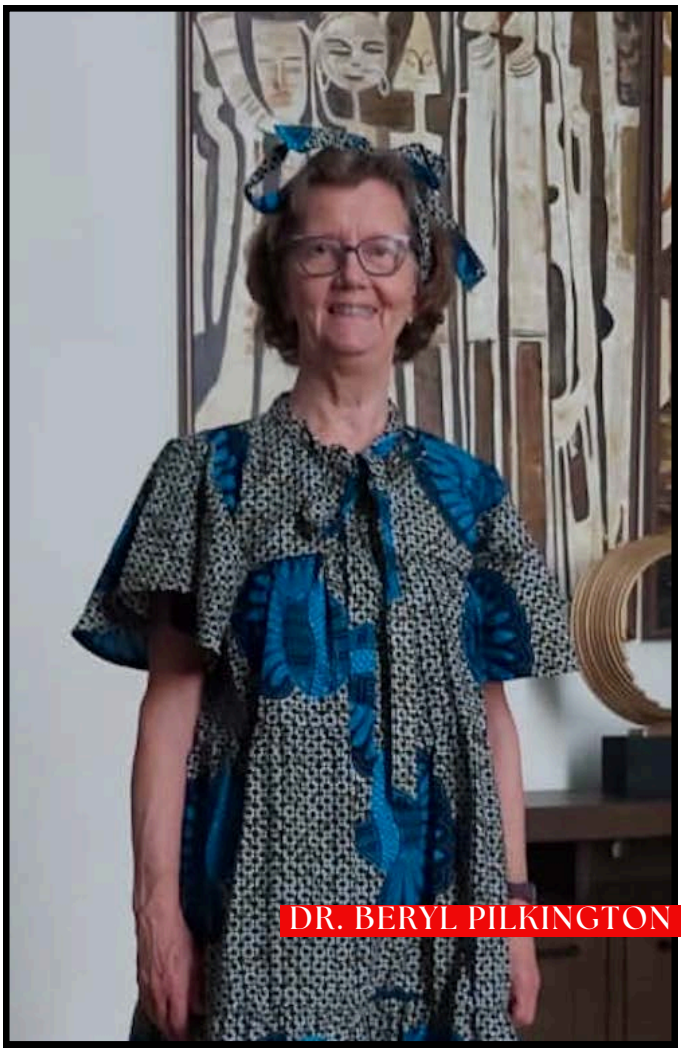
A leading scholar in Global Health, Dr. Boateng has authored over 50 peer-reviewed publications, garnering more than 3,000 citations. His work appears in top-tier journals including BMJ Global Health, Social Science & Medicine, Journal of Environmental Management, Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Water, American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, Frontiers in Public Health, and Health Policy and Planning. His widely recognized primer on best practices for developing and validating research scales has been accessed over 180,000 times and downloaded more than 30,000 times globally. It has directly contributed to the creation of over 500 research scales across multiple disciplines.

Insight on Dr. Beryl Pilkington:

Beryl Pilkington is a nurse educator and researcher whose career spans clinical practice, international development, and academia. She began as a staff nurse and clinical specialist in maternal-newborn and women's health, later serving as a CUSO cooperant in Nigeria (1992) at a treatment center for women with obstetric fistulae. She holds a BScN (Western University), MScN (University of Toronto), and PhD in Nursing (Loyola University Chicago).

After working as a nurse researcher at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, she joined York University's School of Nursing, where she served as a faculty member from 1999 to 2021. Her research focused on quality of life, social determinants of health, and resilience among marginalized populations, including low-income individuals with diabetes, women experiencing violence or cancer, and older adults in long-term care.

From 2014 to 2016, Beryl led an IDRC-funded community health project in the Dadaab refugee camps in Kenya, part of the CIDA-supported "Borderless Higher Education for Refugees" initiative. Her ongoing interests include strengthening nursing capacity and expanding postgraduate education in low- and middle-income countries.



DR. BERYL PILKINGTON

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. BERYL PILKINGTON

Q: Could you introduce yourself? What is your role at York and how are you conencted to York's Gobal Health program?

A: Dr. Beryl Pilkington retired from full-time academic work in July 2021 and currently holds the title of Professor Emeritus and Senior Scholar in the School of Nursing at York University. From 2013 to 2020, she served as the inaugural coordinator of York's Global Health BA and BSc programs. During this time, she also helped lead the proposal for what would become the new School of Global Health.

In addition to her work in global health, she served as an Associate Professor, Graduate Program Director, and played a key role in developing the PhD program in the School of Nursing—demonstrating her long-standing commitment to health education and equity.

Q: What drew you to the area of global health, and was there a defining moment in your career that solidified your passion?

A: Although she initially did not define her work as "global health," her perspective changed following a transformative year in Nigeria. In what she describes as a radical

and life-changing decision, Dr. Pilkington volunteered as a nurse educator and clinical manager at a fistula clinic through an organization called QUOS. The clinic served women with obstetric fistula, and her time there broadened her view of health and human rights beyond Canada's borders. This experience deeply affected her and led to long-term collaborations, including a professional partnership with a colleague from the University of Ghana, who later became the Dean of Nursing at a new university. This partnership enabled Dr. Pilkington's global health work to flourish.

After returning from sabbatical (2012-2013), she discovered that York's Faculty of Health was moving forward with a proposal for a new Global Health undergraduate program. She applied and was selected as the program's first coordinator, officially cementing her role in the field of global health.

Q: Your career specifically in research spanned over many topics, what would you say was the topic that you were the most passionate about and why?

A: Dr. Pilkington's research has always been informed by her practice. For example, her interest in loss and grieving stemmed from her hospital work supporting families through prenatal bereavement. After completing her PhD, she worked as a Nurse Researcher at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, where she began exploring issues related to long-term care, eventually developing a passion for seniors' health and quality of life in later years.

When she transitioned to a faculty position at York in 1999, she lost access to the clinical environment and shifted to community-based research. Still driven by a social justice lens, she became deeply involved with the surrounding community in the Jane and Finch area, eventually serving on the board—and later as board chair—of the Black Creek Community Health Centre. This work fueled her interest in chronic disease and health equity, particularly among low-income individuals living with Type 2 diabetes. Dr. Pilkington has also remained deeply committed to maternal, child, and women's health through ongoing international collaborations, especially in Ghana. Her involvement in a government-funded initiative for borderless higher education for refugees (through the now-defunct CIDA) allowed her to partner with the Dean of Nursing from a Kenyan university. Together, they conducted a health needs assessment in the Dadaab refugee camp near the Somali border. This work led to the development of a community health education tool tailored for refugees—enhancing access to health knowledge for one of the world's most vulnerable populations.

Throughout her diverse and impactful career, Dr. Pilkington has remained anchored by a commitment to equity, compassion, and the belief that health is a fundamental human right—no matter where one lives.

Q: As you have been credited as one of the pioneers who helped establish the School of Global Health, could you share a bit of the history and process connected to that?

A: Dr. Beryl Pilkington brought deep experience in academic program development to the founding of York University's School of Global Health. Prior to this, she had led the creation of both the Master's and PhD programs in the School of Nursing, which gave her the foundation to take on the challenges of developing a new interdisciplinary program.

After her sabbatical she stepped into a key moment—York was beginning to roll out its new Global Health program. Drawing on her enthusiasm for building new initiatives, Dr. Pilkington led the rollout, which included finalizing the curriculum, assembling a faculty team, and laying down the program's infrastructure. Her interest in global health led her to become a scholar with the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research (CCGHR). It was through this network that she met Dr. Vic Neufeld, a leading Canadian global health scholar who shared a personal connection to Ghana. Dr. Neufeld became a trusted mentor and played a pivotal role in deepening her engagement with the field. Support from institutional leadership was also key.

Dr. Harvey Skinner, then-Dean of the Faculty of Health, was instrumental in backing the program and convening a steering committee made up of representatives from all Faculty of Health schools. This created a strong team environment, supported further by an informal faculty group and the dedicated student leaders of the Global Health Students' Association (GHSA), who provided regular feedback that helped shape the evolving program.

The undergraduate Global Health program officially launched in 2014 and reached full implementation within four years. A Specialized Honours stream was later introduced. Dr. Pilkington takes pride in how the program integrates diverse disciplines—including nursing, psychology, kinesiology, and health systems—to offer a truly global and interdisciplinary education.

Q: What current trends are you seeing in the field of global health that you believe that current students and alumni should be aware of?

A: Dr. Pilkington highlights three major areas shaping the future of global health: digital health, climate justice, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

She emphasizes the vital role digital health plays in transitioning from analog systems to more effective tools for communication and data management. But it is climate justice that she considers the most pressing issue facing humanity today. It is, she says, a topic that transcends global health, affecting every discipline and community. AMR is another significant concern. Already being addressed through research at the Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research, AMR reflects the growing need for multidisciplinary responses to global threats.

Now retired, Dr. Pilkington dedicates much of her time to climate activism through Seniors for Climate Action Now!, a Canada-wide organization. She encourages students to stay informed and engaged by following academic organizations, reading trusted sources (such as The Guardian), and subscribing to newsletters like those offered by the Canadian Association for Global Health—which also hosts an annual conference.

Her advice? "Keep your finger on the pulse"—by staying curious, informed, and connected to the broader global health community.

Q: What were some of the unexpected challenges you have faced, and how did you overcome them?

A: Dr. Pilkington encountered numerous structural challenges in the early stages of program development. Without a consistent team of full-time faculty, much of the teaching relied on contract instructors and graduate students. Despite these limitations, she and her colleagues remained confident in the program's potential and committed to its growth.

She also had to navigate collaboration with faculty from diverse disciplines beyond global health, which required negotiation, flexibility, and a deep commitment to shared vision-building. These experiences reinforced the value of persistence, teamwork, and long-term thinking in higher education.

Q: What role can current and recently graduated students take to get involved?

A: "Be a joiner," Dr. Pilkington advises. She stresses the importance of building relationships in the field by reaching out to professionals, joining organizations, and attending events. Opportunities often come from these proactive efforts.

She credits her own mentor, Dr. Vic Neufeld, with shaping her path and encourages students to seek out similar connections—whether through academic networks, mentorships, or clinical and professional settings. Engaging with faculty, asking questions, and showing initiative can lead to valuable guidance and opportunities.

Q: How do you personally practice wellness, and how have these practices influenced your work and the way you engage with students and communities?

A: Dr. Pilkington maintains her wellness through strong social support and consistent physical activity. Describing herself as highly motivated and passionate, she says friends and family help her stay grounded and balanced.

One of her most reliable strategies is taking a walk at lunchtime to step away from screens and refresh mentally. For her, movement, mindfulness, and social connection are all essential to long-term wellness—values she brought into her relationships with students and colleagues.

Q: Are there any "words of wisdom" you would like to add or share to the readers of this newsletter?

A: Dr. Pilkington shared that she's always been a bit of a risk taker — not just in academia, but in life. "I could tell you story after story," she laughed, "but you probably don't have time for them all."

She emphasized the importance of taking sensible risks, noting, "Nothing ventured, nothing gained. My advice is to be willing to try many things — even if it means stepping outside your comfort zone." For her, curiosity and experimentation have been major driving forces: "I've always liked to dive in and try things out to see how they work."

She encouraged readers to adopt and adapt to change early, even when it's intimidating. "Not everyone's willing to go first — some people wait to see how things turn out for others. But I've often just gone for it, even when it was scary. I'd think, 'This sounds interesting. I'm passionate about it. I want to learn more.' And that often opened doors I never expected."

Reflecting on her career, Dr. Pilkington said she never had a strict roadmap. Instead, she followed opportunities as they arose, driven by curiosity and the desire to learn.

"There's truth to the cliché: nothing ventured, nothing gained."

She also spoke about the value of mindfulness and being present. "Try to appreciate each moment as a learning opportunity — even when it doesn't seem useful. There's always something to be gained from every experience."

For her, mindfulness isn't just a wellness tool; it's essential for personal growth and meaningful connection. "It helps you become a more engaged person. As the Indigenous worldview reminds us, we need to honour all our relations — not just with people, but with the Earth and all living beings. There's so much richness in life, but we'll miss it if we're always rushing around and focused on our phones."

She concluded with a gentle reminder: "Cultivate awareness. Stay curious. And don't be afraid to try."

Q: Is there anything that you would like to share that we might have missed asking you about and it does not have to be related to global health?

A: Beyond her academic and professional achievements, Dr. Pilkington is an avid reader with a particular love for Indigenous authors. Among her favorites are *The Inconvenient Indian* by Thomas King and the *Ganache Mystery series*. She's also a longtime reader of Margaret Atwood's novels. Her reading choices reflect her deep interest in storytelling, cultural history, and social justice —interests that continue to inform her perspective on global health and education.

NAEEMA HASSAN

AN INTERVIEW WITH NAEEMA HASSAN

Q: Could you introduce yourself and share how you are connected to both York University and to global health?

A: Naeema Hassan began her academic journey at York University in the Global Health program, specializing in Health Systems, Policy, and Management. Initially, her plan was to pursue a career as a physician assistant (PA), with the Global Health program serving as a stepping stone. At the time, she had little understanding of what global health truly entailed.

It wasn't until her first year, and more profoundly during her second year, that her perspective began to shift. A transformative moment occurred when she took a course on the social determinants of health. The professor of that course not only became a mentor but also inspired her to see global health as a dynamic and expansive field. Through mentorship, she came to understand that health extended far beyond biology—it was deeply embedded in social, political, and economic contexts.

That mentorship gave Naeema the confidence to explore the program in greater depth, ultimately leading her to fall in love with the field of global health. Her time at YorkU was marked by exploration, self-discovery, and the realization that health is about people's lived experiences—not just medical systems.

Q: From undergrad to PhD in global health – what about YorkU's Global Health Program was a defining moment in your educational or professional career?

A: For Naeema, a first-generation Somali Canadian and eldest of many siblings, the academic journey often felt isolating—until she connected with inspiring mentors like Dr. Roberta Timothy, whose authentic approach to health and justice resonated deeply. Other faculty, including Dr. Tara Penny and Dr. Adrian Viens, also left lasting impressions through their dedication and support. After earning her Master's in Public Administration at Queen's and gaining field experience, Naeema completed an internship at NYU Abu Dhabi, where she worked on global health research and policy. There, she reconnected with Professor Mary Wiktorowicz, a moment that reignited her passion for research and introduced her to YorkU's new PhD program in Global Health. She was surprised—almost in disbelief—that such an opportunity was within reach.

Once unimaginable, her path reflects the power of mentorship, global experience, and inclusive academic spaces that make students from all walks of life feel like they belong.

Q: Why did you choose to pursue a career in management consulting, and how did you navigate entering a space traditionally geared toward business students?

A: Naeema shared that, like many students entering the global health field, her early ambitions were rooted in working with intern-

ational organizations like the UN, WHO, or the Gates Foundation. Management consulting wasn't initially on her radar. It was only through her own curiosity and a desire to explore what was next after working as a policy analyst in the Ontario public sector that she began to uncover new possibilities.

One of her biggest lessons through undergrad and her MPA was the value of networking—something she believes should begin as early as high school. While actively networking during her time in public service, she learned about management consulting and discovered that several firms, including the "Big Four" (KPMG, Deloitte, EY, and Accenture), offer health consulting services.

Naeema entered digital health consulting through a recommendation she received in a networking conversation. She had to prepare rigorously for the case interviews that are part of the consulting recruitment process—something traditionally emphasized in business programs. Despite not having a business background, she found that her training in global health equipped her well for these challenges. The program had sharpened her quantitative and qualitative analysis skills and honed her critical thinking—tools she applied to real-world cases. An example that she mentioned was a Global Health case where you could be assessing survey data to improve vaccine distribution and then be required to provide recommendations based on the assessment that you have done. She acknowledged that consulting is often viewed through a profit-driven, capitalist lens. However, she brought a different perspective: a passion for human-centered care and an understanding that health is more than just science—it's about improving systems to better serve people. When she entered the field, she was the only one in her cohort with a health sciences background—most of her peers came from business schools like Schulich, Rotman, or Ivey—but the experience was mutually enriching.

She sees it as a powerful career path for those interested in systems-level change. Her advice?

"Champion yourself." If people with no health background can become healthcare consultants, global health graduates should feel just as confident entering traditionally business-oriented spaces.

Q: How do you personally practice wellness, and how have these practices influenced your work and the way you engage with fellow students, peers, and communities?

A: For Naeema, wellness means doing meaningful work in environments that respect healthy boundaries—something she finds more common in academia than in corporate settings. She nurtures balance by combining work with joy, like reading articles in the park, and finds fulfillment in sharing knowledge. A strong support system outside of school, engaging hobbies, and maintaining a sense of self are essential. Pilates is a central part of her routine, and she even dreams of opening her own studio. Most importantly, the friendships she's built—especially during university—bring laughter, joy, and support that help sustain her through academic life. She believes that wellness is not just about self-care, but also about being in spaces that allow you to thrive. For Naeema, wellness is a continuous practice rooted in connection, intention, and joy.

Q: Are there any "words of wisdom" you would like to add or share with the readers of this newsletter?

Naeema reminds students that "rejection is often just redirection" and that fixed plans can change for the better. "Don't let the spaces you're in define your worth," she says—seek out those that uplift you.

Though she didn't expect to pursue a PhD, she embraced the journey: "I didn't plan for this, but every step led me here."

She's faced impostor syndrome, especially in fields like consulting, and urges students to build supportive circles.

"Success isn't linear," she says. "Behind every polished LinkedIn post are real struggles—you can overcome them too."

AN INTERVIEW WITH ESSETE M. TESFAYE

Q: Could you introduce yourself and share a bit about your journey at York University?

A: Originally interested in pediatrics, Essete's career path shifted after a high school internship at a Ugandan hospital. When a mother had brought in her daughter because she was experiencing a severe fever, weakness and other symptoms. Essete witnesed the doctor treat the young girl for malaria without proper testing due to the family's financial constraints. Although the patient recovered, the experience exposed Essete to critical issues of health equity and systemic gaps in public health. This inspired her to pursue Global Health at York University. She later chose the eHealth stream for its blend of logic-based problem solving—discovered through coding and database courses—and its innovative potential in transforming healthcare through technology like Electronic Health Records and AI diagnostics.

At York University, Essete's first campus job as a Residence Services Assistant during the COVID-19 pandemic helped her develop strong interpersonal skills and connect with others during a time of isolation. She then became a Residence Life Don, a pivotal role that deepened her passion for youth mental health, crisis response, and community building. While serving on the Pedagogy to Aid Transition to Higher Education advisory board, she helped develop resources to support students' academic transitions. As a research assistant with Dr. Lora Appel, she explored practical tech solutions like using VR to ease dental anxiety. Currently, she works as a Residence Life Coordinator, a professional role where she supervises two Don teams and supports students through conduct and care cases.

After graduation, Essete realized that personal and professional growth requires more deliberate effort than during university. Without clear goals at first, she faced challenges but found that setting short-term (3–6 month) goals provided direction and momentum. She also learned to value periods of stability, especially during major transitions. Personally, her curiosity has driven meaningful growth—through connecting with diverse people, exploring new cultures, and developing a love for travel and lifelong learning.

Q: What initially drew you to the field of Global Health, and was there a defining moment in your undergraduate journey that solidified your passion for this work?

A: A pivotal moment for Essete was taking the *Foundations of Global Health* course in her first year. It gave her the language and framework to explore long-standing interests, and despite its early start time, she looked forward to every class—affirming that Global Health was the right path for her. Her identity and upbringing in East Africa deeply shaped

her passion for global health equity. Witnessing gaps in public health systems firsthand, she became especially committed to creating culturally relevant mental health programs within the Ethiopian community, where stigma remains a barrier to care. She was particularly drawn to Program and Policy Evaluation, which offered insight into why well-meaning initiatives can fall short. Evaluating women's reproductive health policies fueled her interest in this area, where she hopes to make a future impact.

Q: How did your Global Health education prepare you for your current role or post-graduation path? Were there skills or concepts that proved especially useful?

A: Although not immediately apparent, there are numerous parallels between the Global Health program and her role as a Residence Life Coordinator. She regularly apply technical skills acquired from courses such as program evaluation and research methods, including quantitative and qualitative data analysis used in assessing educational programs. Additionally, she utilize frameworks from Program and Policy Evaluation to provide feedback on our curriculum annually. The knowledge gained about health conditions and management strategies informs my approach to student support, often guided by a harm-reduction framework when addressing substance use. Furthermore, soft skills developed through practicum, capstone, and group projects—such as progress reporting, boundary management, professional communication, and collaborative teamwork—remain integral to her work.

Q: Can you share how your mentors influenced your trajectory, and how future alumni can seek or become impactful mentors in their own communities?

A: Mentorship has had a profound impact on her personal and professional growth. Her mentors have helped her overcome self-imposed limitations, explore new paths, and offered valuable guidance that shaped my decisions. Essete's key advice for finding mentors is simple: show up. Attending every class and making use of office hours not only helped her academically but also allowed her to build meaningful relationships with professors, leading to conversations about my goals and future opportunities. Developing genuine connections is essential to both personal and academic success.

Q: What were some of the unexpected challenges you have faced, and how did you overcome them?

A: One unexpected challenge Essete faced was learning to validate herself without relying on external markers like grades. She began tracking and celebrating all achievements, big or small, to remind myself of my progress. This helped shift her focus from seeking approval to valuing growth. She also adopted a mindset that prioritizes learning over outcomes, viewing setbacks as opportunities to improve, which has strengthened her confidence and resilience.

Q: As you look back on your time at York and forward to what's next, do you have any final reflections or "words of wisdom" for current students, especially those pursuing a path in global health?

A: Essete's success stemmed from believing in herself and finding joy in learning. Embracing curiosity and staying open-minded helped her overcome self-doubt and fully engage in her studies. She especially enjoyed class discussions and the learning process itself, which made her academic journey fulfilling. Looking back, she would tell her first-year self to explore more, try new things, and not limit her interests too early. To other students, she advises being intentional after graduation—without regular feedback, it's important to define your own path, recognize your progress, and celebrate every accomplishment, no matter how small. "Growth takes time, but it's always meaningful," Essete stated.

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD WU

Q: Could you introduce yourself and share a bit about your journey at York University?

A: Richard is a recent graduate of the Global Health program at York University. Before that, he earned a degree in Honours Science from the University of Waterloo. After completing his first degree, he realized he wanted to explore more interdisciplinary and service-oriented work, which led him to pursue Global Health as a second degree at York. His academic journey was driven by a desire to combine his love for science with a commitment to advocacy and helping others.

Q: What roles did you take on during your time at York?

A: During his time at York, Richard became involved in several impactful initiatives.

A key experience was joining the Global and Environmental Health Lab, led by Dr. Godfred Boateng. After taking Dr. Boateng's course, Richard volunteered in the lab, gaining valuable research experience. His work led to opportunities to present both oral and poster presentations at international conferences.

He also participated in a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) project through York International in collaboration with Brunel University in the UK. His team focused on SDG 12—responsible consumption and production, specifically targeting ways to make sustainable protein sources more appealing and accessible. Their project won best overall out of several highly competitive entries.

Q: What initially drew you to the field of global health? Was there a defining moment that solidified your passion?

A: Richard's path to global health was influenced by a range of experiences. As president of the undergraduate student union at Waterloo, he found deep fulfillment in supporting his peers and improving student life. Coupled with his experience working at St. Michael's Hospital during the COVID-19 pandemic, he realized he wanted to pursue a path that combined health, science, and service.

Academically, a few key courses stood out. One was a health policy course with Dr. Mathieu Poirier, which explored the commercial determinants of health. A case study on how multinational corporations disrupted food systems in Pacific Island nations left a strong impression on him. Another pivotal class was Global Health and Humanitarianism with Dr. Boateng, which broadened his understanding of the field. A practicum experience in Jordan further reinforced his desire to work in international health policy and advocacy.

Q: You were awarded the prestigious McCall MacBain Scholarship. Do you have any advice for students thinking of applying or going through a similar process?

A: Richard emphasized that the act of simply trying, even with self-doubt present, is so

important. When he first applied, he didn't expect to make it to the interview stage, let alone win the scholarship. The application process itself was highly introspective, requiring him to reflect deeply on his personal journey, challenges, and growth.

One of the most valuable aspects, he says, was realizing how many people had supported him along the way. The interview phase focused on character and values, which made him appreciate the opportunity to connect with passionate individuals. He credited Dr. Adrian Viens for advising him to focus on authenticity and to see the process as a meaningful learning experience, regardless of the outcome.

Q: You've accomplished a lot. What wellness practices do you use to stay grounded and motivated?

A: For Richard, wellness begins with movement. He strongly believes that "movement is medicine," and that it doesn't have to be intense or extreme. Activities like biking, climbing, and lifting help him maintain both physical and mental well-being. He also prioritizes basic habits like eating regularly, drinking enough water, and getting sufficient sleep. These simple practices, he says, kept him grounded and performing at his best throughout his studies

Q: What is one key lesson you've learned from working in healthcare and studying global health?

A: One of Richard's biggest takeaways from his combined academic and professional experiences is the importance of being human. Working in the emergency department at St. Michael's Hospital and studying global health taught him that effective care starts with meeting people where they are.

He pointed out that while the biomedical model can be paternalistic, global health takes a more equitable and holistic approach. Understanding that every patient has a full, complex life is crucial.

He believes that seeing people as whole individuals; not just their conditions, is what ultimately defines compassionate and effective global health work.

Photographed Above (From left to right): Amina Fadzha Abam (Co-President), Dr. Godfred Boateng, and Amina Nurzha Abam (Co-president)

Farewell Message from the Global Health Student Association 2024-2025

The 2024-2025 Global Health Students Association team had made significant efforts in providing tremendous academic and social support to undergraduate students in the Global Health program throughout the 2024-2025 academic year. One of the key highlights that they have done was the implementation of great initiatives aligned with some of the UN Sustainable Development Goals alongside the academic support that they have been delivering yearly such as the peer mentoring and peer tutoring services.

These initiatives include enabling Global Health students at York University to participate in a case competition with a focus on addressing issues tied with maternal health, hosting the very first global health alumni event in partnership with the School of Global Health Alumni team and the Faculty of Health, providing free meals to York University students in partnership with Calumet College Council, and hosting a workshop on menstrual equity in partnership with Free Periods Canada.

The team actively collaborated with various faculty members and staff within the School of Global Health to ensure that the academic and social needs of students were acknowledged and met. Most importantly, the GHSA has made an impactful contribution to student life through strong partnerships with important relevant stakeholders and active consultation with global health student community.

Welcome Message from the 2025-2026 GHSA

The Global Health Students' Association (GHSA), led by President Zakeera Zaidi and Executive Vice President Fatima Zeeshan, is committed to building a strong, connected Global Health community at York University this year. Our plans include academic support programs like peer mentoring and tutoring, as well as interactive events and collaborations designed to help students network, learn, and thrive in both academic and social settings.

THE GLOBAL HEALTH CLASS OF 2025 CELEBRATION

EVENT RECAP

On June 18, 2025, the Global Health Alumni Network hosted the *Global Health Class of 2025 Celebration*—a vibrant post-convocation event that brought together graduates, families, and faculty for an afternoon of connection and celebration.

The event featured a variety of engaging activities, including curated photo opportunities to capture memorable moments, a dedicated advice station where recent alumni could leave behind advice to next year's global health graduates, and thoughtfully prepared commemorative tokens to mark the occasion. Beyond the celebratory elements, the gathering served as a platform for meaningful dialogue on global health challenges and opportunities, while formally recognizing the Class of 2025 as emerging leaders poised to make a lasting impact in the field.

A MESSAGE TO THE GLOBAL HEALTH CLASS OF 2025

Congratulations to the Global Health Class of 2025!

Your commitment, intellectual curiosity, and passion for global health have defined your academic journey and set you apart as emerging leaders in this vital field. As you transition from students to professionals, your influence is only beginning to unfold. With the knowledge, skills, and vision you have cultivated, you are well positioned to drive transformative change and shape a more equitable and healthier world. We look forward to witnessing the remarkable contributions you will undoubtedly make in the years ahead!

THANK YOU...

Gratitude is extended to the volunteers from York University and the Global Health Student Association, and to the Global Health Alumni Network Team for their leadership and support. Special thanks to the team responsible for documenting the occasion. This event was made possible through the support of the Faculty of Health, the School of Global Health, and the Dahdaleh Institute for Global Health Research.

Meet the Global Health Alumni Network Team & The Newsletter Team

Dr. Godfred Boateng

Radhika Jain

Mirianna Georges

Yasmin Husen

Amtull Rehman

Please share your insights and/or feedback with us on our socials or via email:

ghalumni@yorku.ca

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Contact Us!

A Message from the Team

Hello, YorkU's Global Health Community!

Welcome to the second issue of the YorkU Global Health Network Newsletter! We would like to thank you all for the wonderful response we received to our inaugural newsletter and for the feedback we received in our polls. This issue, as many of you have already read is surrounded the journey after graduation or the life of a Global health Alumni. We have focused and reflected on the feedback we received and tried to have a variety of pathways after global health showcased so that more realistic careers can be highlighted.

Stay connected with us through our LinkedIn group, and don't hesitate to reach out via email. Look out for our next newsletter!

Best,
The Global Health Alumni Network Team