



The Weill Cornell Center for Human Rights

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Upcoming Events

Educational Event: Female Genital Mutilation

Date and location will be posted on wcchr.com.

Announcements

The 2015 Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) National Student Conference will be held at Columbia University on Saturday, November 7.

NYU will be hosting a screening of the documentary "The Man Who Mends Women" on October 22. RSVP at the following website: https://events.nyu.edu/#event_id/75513/view/event



Photo credit: latimesblogs.latimes.com

Detention Center Evaluations

Eighty-one detention centers across the United States hold thousands of illegal immigrants awaiting a final decision on their possible deportation. These centers can be private facilities, state and local jails, juvenile detention centers, or shelters. The conditions within detention centers have long been a controversial topic, as an increasing number of articles denounce the way detainees are treated. After a long and difficult process, WCCHR faculty and student volunteers have been able to conduct a small number of forensic evaluations for clients held in detention centers. Most recently, Darya Terekhova, a second-year medical student, and Carmen Stellar, our Executive Director, have been involved in two separate detention center cases conducted by Dr. Joseph Shin and Dr. Carolyn Langelier at the Hudson County Correctional Center. Observing the conditions associated with incarceration firsthand has been an eye-opening experience for student and faculty volunteers alike. "The asylum seeker I had the privilege of working with was dressed in an orange jumpsuit, and was indistinguishable from any other prisoner being held at the Hudson County Correctional Center,"¹ says Carmen.

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To prepare for the evaluation, our volunteers had to be particularly careful to adhere to the strict dress code. Any materials required for the evaluation, such as stethoscopes for a medical evaluation, had to be preapproved by the facility. Additionally, the detention center performed background checks to ensure that volunteers were not in any way connected to the detainee. The evaluations were then performed in a room that offered little privacy, as it was under constant video surveillance. Moreover, detainees were not allowed to disrobe during the evaluation, making medical evaluations in particular much more difficult. As Carmen describes, “The medical interview was interrupted a number of times by the slamming of auto-locking metal doors, and by the disembodied voice from an overhead speaker announcing 15 minutes of ‘lock-down’ time for inmates.” Our detention center cases have thus given us a valuable perspective on the difficult conditions asylum seekers can face in the United States upon fleeing from traumatic circumstances in their home countries. We hope to facilitate more detention center cases in the near future to broaden our impact and raise awareness among students.

Student-Faculty Lunches

The WCCHR has begun hosting student-faculty lunches to strengthen mentorship and communication between faculty and students. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. Both faculty and students have praised the informal setting and the breadth of topics that were discussed, including not only asylum work but also medical careers in general. If you are a faculty member interested in leading a student-faculty lunch, please email Sarah Littlehale (sal2031@med.cornell.edu) and Donovan White (drw2005@med.cornell.edu). We look forward to continuing this new tradition.

In the News

Judge Increases Pressure on U.S. to Release Migrant Families

—NYTimes, August 2015

Judge Dolly M. Gee of California has raised her voice against the Obama administration’s handling of immigrant mothers and children caught illegally crossing the border. She has given the Obama administration two months to respond to her original ruling, handed down in July, asserting that two detention centers in Texas failed to meet minimum legal requirements for housing children. The basis of her ruling was a class action lawsuit known as Flores, which “has governed the treatment of minors apprehended at the border.” In her 25-page report, the Judge criticized the “widespread deplorable conditions” to which many mothers and children are exposed for many months. She argued for strict enforcement of requirements and swift release of families from detention centers. Click the link below for more...



Photo credit: NYTimes.com

Link to article: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/23/us/judge-increases-pressure-on-us-to-release-migrant-families.html?ref=topics&_r=0

Spotlight on...

Claire Ryan, MS3

Claire Ryan is a third year medical student at Weill Cornell Medical College and currently the Education Coordinator at WCCHR. She was born in Chicago, Illinois. She graduated from Northwestern University with a B.S. in Social Policy in 2008. After college, she was granted a Fulbright Teaching Assistantship to France where she taught English for two years. Afterwards, Claire moved back to Chicago and worked as a clinical research coordinator at Lurie Children's Hospital. After coming to medical school, she became involved with WCCHR during her first year as event coordinator. She later transitioned to Education Coordinator and has been planning asylum trainings and lecture series for students and faculty. She hopes to continue working in human rights and with asylees as she moves forward with her career.



Sarah Grossbard, MD

Sarah Jane Grossbard M.D. is a graduate of Harvard Medical School and completed her residency training at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and New York University Medical Center. Dr. Grossbard has been a member of the volunteer Asylum Network of Physicians for Human Rights since 2014, conducting psychological evaluations of asylum seekers. She has been in private practice since 2004.

