

## Welcome to Our Spring Newsletter!

One of the warmest Salzburg winters in decades has ushered in early spring flowers and the transition to a new season. At the Open Medical Institute, we embrace new beginnings and seize the opportunities of a vibrant year ahead. In the last three months, we have kickstarted the 2024 seminar series, hosting nine courses in Salzburg and Mexico City. We have welcomed our first observers and are eagerly preparing for several satellite symposia. Besides our program stories, this newsletter also highlights a very special event that took place in February at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Enjoy these stories and learning about our latest endeavors!



## Making Childbirth Safer

Giving birth to a child is one of the most memorable experiences in a woman's life. Despite the importance of this event, each year, millions of births still occur without any assistance from a skilled attendant. At the OMI obstetrics and gynecology program, faculty members are actively working on changing this statistic by educating fellows from all over the world on medical procedures during labor and delivery. One of the techniques demonstrated in a workshop was vacuum extraction, which helps get the baby through the birth canal. Guided by the expert faculty, fellows developed the knowledge, skills, and competency to identify the need for vacuum-assisted birth, perform the

procedure, and manage complications.

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### **A Touching Letter from Ethiopia**

Can you imagine a young pathologist based in a remote area of Ethiopia, affected by civil unrest and enduring complete internet blackouts, would travel over 500 kilometers to reach the capital city of Addis Ababa to access the internet and apply for an OMI seminar? That journey is exactly what Dr. Alem Alemwosen underwent to sign up for this year's Cleveland Clinic pathology course in Salzburg. Guess what! He was chosen out of 144 applicants and received the fellowship he was aiming for. In a heartfelt letter to the OMI, Dr. Alemwosen vividly depicts his arduous journey, the plethora of medical knowledge he gained, and the new friendships he forged. To read the OMI fellow's entire letter, follow the link!

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## **Heart Health: The Key to a Happy Beat**

In a world that constantly pulls us in countless directions, it is easy to overlook the most vital organ that keeps us ticking – the heart. None other than Dr. Robert J. Kim from Weill Cornell Medicine, who has been involved with the OMI since 2007, teaching numerous courses in Salzburg, led the very first cardiology seminar in Mexico City at the beginning of March. This event opened the OMI MEX seminar season of 2024, with 12 more courses up ahead. The US and Mexican faculty, including interventional cardiologists, advanced heart failure and transplant experts, as well as cardiac electrophysiologists, were keen on sharing their knowledge with 22 fellows who came together from eight cities throughout Mexico.

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## **Celebrating 30 Years of Healing and Hope with OMI and CHOP**

A lot can be achieved in 30 years! What started out in Salzburg in 1994 with a pediatric seminar for doctors from Central and Eastern Europe evolved over time and became a sought-after training ground for thousands of pediatricians worldwide. Countless children's lives, especially in lesser developed countries, have been improved because of the partnership between the OMI and CHOP, one of the world's leading pediatric hospitals. On February 6, 2024, representatives of UPenn, CHOP, AAF, and OMI came together to celebrate this anniversary. It was wonderful seeing so many supportive individuals in one space for such a joyful reason. We are more than fortunate to have this relationship with CHOP, not to mention all the dedicated faculty members who have made this program what it is today. Here's to 30 more years!

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## Speak Up about What You Believe In!

What would you do to support a cause that you believe in? Dr. Mark G. Kris from the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in New York, USA, went the extra mile by publishing a video about the OMI with *Medscape*. *Medscape* is one of the leading online global platforms for healthcare professionals worldwide, offering the latest medical news and expert perspectives. Dr. Kris is not only one of the most kindhearted OMI faculty members, but also an exceptionally skilled thoracic oncologist. We would like to thank him for taking the time to create the video, which spreads the word about the OMI and highlights that he truly feels passionate about our work! Dr. Kris' video encapsulates the OMI's mission of, in his own words, "changing the medical care of the whole world!"

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## Neonatology: Taking Care of the Tiniest Patients

The first time a mother embraces her baby is a moment of immense happiness. However, not all babies get a healthy start in life. In fact, according to the WHO, every year, more than 2.3 million neonates die, mostly in low- and middle-income countries, largely due to inappropriate clinical practices at the time of birth and during the first few days of life. Last week, 40 fellows from all corners of the world gathered in Salzburg to learn the latest about the treatment of critically ill newborns and premature infants. Thanks to a generous donation by the Berndorf Privatstiftung, the OMI could open its doors to three fellows from Bogota, Colombia. It is always wonderful to welcome doctors from new countries to our expanding network!

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## Spotlight on Albania

Albania, a small Balkan country that borders the Adriatic and Ionian seas, suffers a tremendous medical brain drain. Presently, the country has 5,400 doctors, which translates to the lowest number of physicians per capita in Europe. This number becomes even more alarming if one considers an emigration rate of 20%. In 2022, the OMI started a retention effort, which, two years later, resulted in a formal partnership between the OMI, the University of Medicine, Tirana, and the University Hospital Center "Mother Teresa". Named after Mother Teresa, who was of Albanian origin, this hospital is the largest health institution in the country. In the last few years, thanks to the active local promotion of our program, there has been an increased involvement of Albanian doctors, totaling in 792 provided fellowships.

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## **Addressing Hearing Loss to Improve Patients' Quality of Life**

In Kazakhstan, thousands of people suffer from hearing loss. Bone conduction implants help those who deal with conductive or mixed hearing loss or single-sided deafness. However, at the present stage, this procedure is not widely performed. Dr. Saltanat Umbetkulova, a young otolaryngologist from Almaty, is currently enrolled in a monthlong OMI observership at the General Hospital of Salzburg. Here, for the very first time, she witnessed bone conduction implant surgery. “My mentor not only demonstrated this procedure to me, but also explained every step of the process in detail. I cannot wait to introduce this technology back home. We can finally offer a solution to patients who have struggled for years and better their quality of life”.

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## Schloss Arenberg: A Home from Home

Making our faculty and fellows feel comfortable is at the top of our priority list. Thanks to the generous donation by board member Mr. Dieter Mann, we were recently able to update 52 chairs in our fellow rooms and refurbish seating in our fellow lounge. After a long day of intense lectures, fellows can now sit back in spacious gray lounge chairs and enjoy reading a book, converse, or just relax.

**Please visit our website and blog to enjoy even more OMI updates!**

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**Yours sincerely,**



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A Program of the American Austrian Foundation

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