

Dear OMI community,

As the year draws to a close, we reflect with immense pride and gratitude on our collective accomplishments. This year has been marked by meaningful milestones, impactful partnerships, and transformative experiences. In 2024, the Open Medical Institute trained an all-time high of 1,829 doctors from 97 countries in 56 seminars in Salzburg, Mexico, and Vietnam. All of this would not have been possible without the support of our faculty, donors, and staff who continuously help us shape the future of medical education throughout the world. In this newsletter edition, we are excited to share a few standout moments of the last three months with you. As the new year comes into view, we approach it with determination, hope, and a vision of humanity for all. We wish you a joyful holiday season and a healthy new year!



A New Era of Healthcare in Africa with OMI

“The seeds of change have been planted in Salzburg. Now, I am ready to cultivate improvement in Ghana’s pediatric landscape.” This inspirational sentiment was shared by OMI fellow Dr. Joceline Mary Israel-Dodoo from the Korle Bu Teaching Hospital in Accra, Ghana, after having spent a week at the OMI. Several years ago, the OMI committed to stemming the exodus of doctors from Sub-Saharan Africa, and shifted its focus towards the South, fostering strategic partnerships with numerous hospitals. In three years, we have more than doubled the number of fellowships provided to African doctors. In 2024

alone, we trained 136 physicians from 18 African countries. Read through our fellows' feedback and discover the transformative impact of our program on their personal and professional development.

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Exploring Cancer Care with MSKCC Icons

Founded in 1884, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center is a world leader in patient care, research, and education. In the last week of October, a multidisciplinary expert faculty convened at the OMI in Salzburg to review state-of-the-art diagnosis, evaluation, and treatment for patients with sarcomas, melanomas, and other skin cancers, paying particular attention to the underlying molecular biology of these diseases. Course director Dr. David G. Pfister was confident that “upon their return home, what the fellows have learned this week will have a significant and positive impact both on the care of their patients and through the many new insights they can share with their colleagues.”

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OMI Brings Pediatric Radiology Expertise to Central Asia

Wow! We were blown away by the enormous interest in our OMI satellite symposium in Almaty, Kazakhstan, held from October 10-11, 2024. 191 radiologists and pediatricians from Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan, and seven regions of Kazakhstan attended the two-day event. What, other than the presence of the renowned specialist Dr. Erich Sorantin from the Medical University of Graz, could draw so many physicians to the symposium? The thrilling schedule and the networking opportunities, of course! “A key highlight was the round table organized with representatives from the School of Pediatrics at the Kazakh National Medical University, the Scientific Center of Pediatrics and Pediatric Surgery, and the Kazakh Institute of Oncology and Radiology. This session was especially significant, as we explored avenues for collaboration and ways to enhance pediatric radiology,” said Dr. Jandos Amankulov, OMI alumnus and the local organizer of the event.

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Making Positive Change in Palliative Care

Palliative care nurse Irena Laska from the Mary Potter Hospice in Korce, Albania, has one passion: advancing palliative care throughout her country to improve the quality of life of patients with cancer and other serious illnesses. Since 2008, she has received intense training at the OMI and has developed into a true leader in the field. Following the annual palliative care seminar week in November in Salzburg, OMI faculty Carrie L. Cormack and Patrick J. Coyne from the Medical University of South Carolina went on to Tirana for a two-day OMI satellite symposium, teaching 54 nurses, physicians, administrators, and social workers. For the very first time, the program featured a pediatric palliative care chapter. Thanks to this joint effort, countless patients will receive better care and will avoid unnecessary suffering.

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Xin Chao from Hanoi!

In mid-November, we were thrilled to return to VinUniversity in Hanoi, Vietnam, to run two clinical seminars for doctors from Southeast Asia. Fellows delved into the world of cardiology with faculty from Weill Cornell Medicine, led by Dr. Robert J. Kim, who said “The seminar was truly an incredible experience! Fellows quickly became comfortable engaging with the faculty and with one another, discussing the nuances, similarities, and differences in the management of a broad variety of cardiac conditions. Their cases were also truly impressive, showcasing outstanding care for some very complex and rare conditions as well as superb, evidence-based management of patients with more common cardiac disorders. It was a fantastic group and a perfect start to what we hope will be a long and enduring tradition!”

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Advancing Child Health in Southeast Asia

“It’s been about 10 days since we returned to “reality” in the US. One of our colleagues asked us to talk about our trip at our monthly leadership meeting today. I have to be honest: I got a bit teary-eyed thinking about it. This trip was life-changing and so reinvigorating on so many levels. The colleagues that we met and the stories that we shared will imprint on my memory for a lifetime,” reflected CHOP faculty Dr. Katie McPeak on our recent general pediatrics seminar in Hanoi. Coming from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Myanmar, and Vietnam, 31 dedicated pediatricians fully immersed themselves in a unique learning experience with the OMI. Take a peek at this vibrant course filled with teaching, empowering, and networking.

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Here a Virus, There a Virus: The World of Viral Hepatitis

Named after its illustrious founder, Louis Pasteur, the Institut Pasteur in Paris, France, owes much to this scientific genius. And so do we! Pasteur's scientific discoveries revolutionized medicine and continue to save the lives of millions today. During our latest OMI global health seminar in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, Dr. Jean-Pierre Vartanian, chief virologist at the Institut Pasteur, and his expert faculty took 30 doctors and scientists on a comprehensive journey through the world of hepatitis viruses and hepatocellular carcinoma. Fun fact: Dr. Albert Calmette, who developed the first vaccine against tuberculosis and founded the Institut Pasteur in Saigon, is the grand-grand uncle of our faculty Dr. Dominique Franco. Dr. Franco is a renowned liver surgeon from Paris, who was on the team that launched liver transplantation in France in 1974 and dedicated his surgical career to liver surgery.

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Life-Saving Pediatric Care in Action

When a child's life hangs in the balance, every decision made by a healthcare professional carries immense weight. The lack of expertise or proper equipment can lead to misdiagnosis, delayed treatment, and, in the worst case, increased morbidity and mortality in children. Course director Dr. Joseph J. Zorc and his CHOP colleagues created a compelling program on how to manage medical, surgical, and traumatic emergencies in children, including a simulation training. 36 fellows from 28 countries rotated between four stations, each focusing on a different emergency scenario. Prior to their arrival in Salzburg, Dr. Zorc and Dr. Kevin C. Osterhoudt shared their expertise with 60 young doctors from Slovakia and the Czech Republic during an OMI satellite symposium in Bratislava from November 15-16, 2024. Thanks for going this extra mile!

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From Cardiology to Neurosurgery: OMI MEX at a Glance

With a striking spinal surgery course, directed by Dr. Roger Härtl (Weill Cornell Medicine) and Dr. Claudius Thomé (Medical University of Innsbruck), we concluded our lively 2024 Mexican chapter in mid-November. Together with AMSA, OMI conducted 11 clinical seminars and two leadership courses. A total of 401 enthusiastic fellows from eight Latin American countries – Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Uruguay – made up this year's cohort. We would like to thank our academic partners – Weill Cornell Medicine, CHOP, MSKCC, Institut Pasteur, ESU, Duke University, Columbia University, and the Medical University of Innsbruck – for helping us to broaden the OMI's footprint in Latin America. Here's to another exciting year of educational endeavors!

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Music for Medicine

The AAF's annual Music for Medicine Benefit took place on December 2, 2024, at the splendid Metropolitan Club in New York City. OMI CEO Dr. Wolfgang Aulitzky was joined by Pablo Legorreta, who sits on the AAF and OMI boards, to share insightful program updates. Guests were treated to an incredibly special concert by members of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra, including Sebastian Breit (oboe), Katharina Engelbrecht (violin), Sebastian Fuehrlinger (viola), and Wolfgang Haertel (cello). Over 200 guests attended the dinner, including AAF board members, OMI faculty and friends, as well as committed individuals from business, law, medicine, and public service. The benefit was a resounding success, having raised over USD 660,000 to date. All funds raised go towards the OMI seminars in Salzburg.

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