MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL
GLOBAL HEALTH

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL
GASTROENTEROLOGY

QUARTER 3
APRIL 2026

MGH GLOBAL GASTROENTEROLOGY Newsletter





Dr. Akwi W Asombang
Interventional Gastroenterologist & Associate Professor of Medicine,
Harvard Medical School
Global Health Programs in Gastroenterology.
Massachusetts General Hospital, USA.

Message from Program Director

There are multiple definitions of global health including an updated 2025 definition. One of the earlier definitions from 2009 is inclusive of the multidisciplinary and bidirectional approach to global health:

WHAT IS GLOBAL HEALTH?

"Global health is an area for study, research, and practice that places a priority on improving health and achieving equity in health for all people worldwide. Global health emphasizes transnational health issues, determinants, and solutions; involves many disciplines within and beyond the health sciences and promotes interdisciplinary collaboration; and is a synthesis of population based prevention with individual-level clinical care."

Reference : Koplan JP et al; Consortium of Universities for Global Health Executive Board. Towards a common definition of global health. Lancet. 2009 Jun 6;373(9679):1993-5. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(09)60332-9.

MGH Global Gastroenterology Newsletter Editors Meet in Lusaka



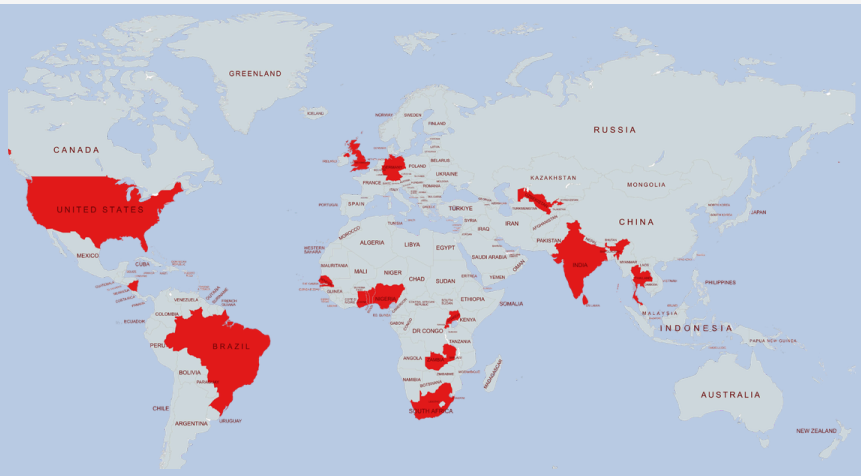
Our MGH Global Gastroenterology Volunteers (Newsletter Editors), Dr. Jennifer Kizza-Brown [right] (Internal Medicine Resident at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School) and Dr. Angelo Autiak Ayii Chol [left] (Medical Doctor Intern and Pan-African Organization for Health, Education and Research [POHER] Scholar alum), recently met in person in Lusaka, Zambia. They participated in the Colorectal Cancer in Africa Awareness Workshop, held in Lusaka at University Teaching Hospital and Ndola at Ndola Teaching Hospital.

As part of their mentorship and global health leadership training, they actively contributed to program planning and played key roles in the successful implementation of the workshop.

MGH & BWH Global Health in Gastroenterology Footprints

Geographic distribution of global gastroenterology activities conducted by Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham & Women's Hospital Faculty across various countries. Activities include:

- Research
- Patient Care
- Policy
- Program Development
- Advocacy



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MGH Global Medicine Pathway: Dr Jennifer Kizza-Brown Travels to Zambia

In February 2026, I had the pleasure of participating in a 1-month rotation abroad at University Teaching Hospital (UTH) of Lusaka, Zambia. My month abroad was facilitated through the global health track, a pathway available to Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) Department of Medicine (DOM) residents. The Global Medicine Program was founded in 2011 as a joint initiative through MGH Global Health and the DOM. The Global Medicine Program is structured around four pillars of MGH's mission —patient care, research, education, and community service. My away rotation afforded me ample space to engage with and grow in all four pillars.



Left to right: Dr. Kizza-Brown with Dr. Enock Syabbalo and Dr. Mupeta Songwe in front of the pathology department

Pre-Travel Preparation

My rotation location was selected due to known opportunities to meet my selected goals, including exposure to endoscopy, further clinical experience with and research evaluation of gastrointestinal oncology practices in the global space, and continued educational growth in general internal medicine, particularly in a different health system setting. To financially support my time abroad, I applied for various grants both internal and external to MGH. My rotation was ultimately funded through support of the MGH DOM Global Medicine Program. The DOM Global Medicine Program also provides protected time for residents to explore global health experiences, allowing me to rotate abroad while still meeting all ACGME/educational requirements for internal medicine residency.


Dr. Kizza-Brown with Dr. Lewis Banda in his office at the Cancer Disease Hospital unit

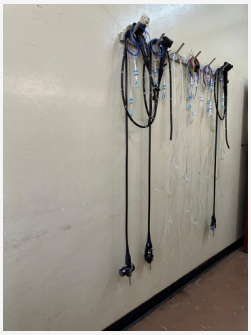
I am grateful for the endless mentorship I received in structuring my rotation. I was most directly supported by Dr. Akwi Asombang, interventional gastroenterologist and director of global health programs in gastroenterology at MGH. Dr. Asombang graciously connected me with various physicians at UTH to ensure a fruitful rotation. This selected team was critical to my productive month in Zambia.

Prior to the rotation, I completed the multi-step process to register as both a researcher and medical provider in Zambia. Given the significant number of notarizations and documents required, it would have been impossible to complete the multi-month registration process in enough time prior to my arrival without the guidance of my team. This team was also immensely helpful in my pre-rotation planning, including acquiring accommodations and on-the ground transport for the month, structuring of my rotation to meet my professional goals, and early understandings of unique challenges and strengths of UTH and the Zambian health care system more generally.

In-Country Experience

My month in Zambia comprised of time seeing patients on the wards with the gastroenterology consultant team/residents, outpatient care in the oncology wards, observation of endoscopies, and participation in journal clubs, lectures, and grand rounds. Flexibility and openness to unexpected domains of exploration was also critical to my wonderful experience abroad. During my month, I additionally spent time with general surgeons, pathologists, and neurologists, all of whom greatly informed my understanding of the UTH hospital system

I hold endless appreciation for the numerous UTH physicians who provided mentorship and educational support prior to, during, and after my rotation, with particular thanks to:



Dr. Kizza-Brown on inpatient rounds on the gastroenterology/endocrinology consult service with consultant physicians and trainees (from left to right): Dr. Mukuba Mukuba (Registrar), Dr. Abigail Chansa Nkhata (trainee) and Dr. Siame (Registrar)

- Dr. Lewis Banda, clinical oncologist and consultant physician of Cancer Diseases Hospital/UTH
- Dr. Malambo Mubbunu, clinical gastroenterologist, endoscopist, and gastroenterology division chief at UTH
- Dr. Enock Syabbalo, clinical gastroenterologist, endoscopist, and consultant physician at UTH
- Dr. Mupeta Songwe, anatomical pathologist and consultant physician at UTH.


Dr. Kizza-Brown on pathology rounds with consultants and trainees

Lessons Gained

This month laid a wonderful foundation for my planned future rotations to Zambia. Upon my return to the United States, our team has continued our communication and collaboration in research, clinical care, and medical education endeavors.

My time abroad served as a reminder of the team effort that medical care requires in any setting, as well as the unique expertise each member of a team brings. I eagerly await my next rotation to Zambia, allowing continued efforts in our collective goal to improve patient care at a global scale.

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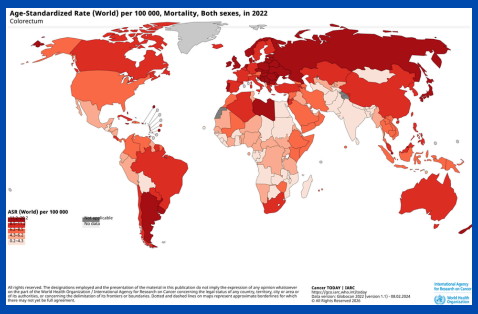
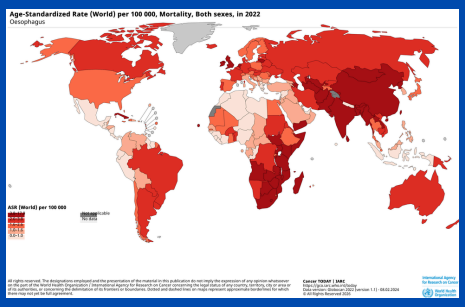
According to the 2022 World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer, the top 3 gastrointestinal cancers are

1. Colorectal cancer 18 per 100,000 (age standardized rate)
2. Gastric cancer 9.2 per 100,000
3. Liver cancer 8.6 per 100,000

March colorectal cancer awareness



April esophageal cancer awareness.



The top 3 Countries for Colorectal and Esophageal Cancers (Age-Standardized Rate (World) per 100 000.

Colorectal

- China
- USA
- Japan

Esophagus

- Malawi
- Bangladesh
- Mongolia

https://gco.iarc.who.int/en

MGH/BWH Faculty Spotlight



D. Punyanganie de Silva, MBBS, MPH, FRCP

Dr. de Silva serves as an associate physician in gastroenterology at Brigham and Women's Hospital and as an assistant professor in medicine at Harvard Medical School.

She graduated with honors from the Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya, and completed her postgraduate gastroenterology and advanced inflammatory bowel diseases fellowship training at the East of England Postgraduate Medical Deanery, Massachusetts General Hospital, and Brigham & Women's Hospital.

Her research is focused on diet and environmental risk factors in inflammatory bowel diseases and women's health in IBD.

She also has a strong interest in global medical education and co-founded a national virtual journal club for gastroenterology trainees under the auspices of the Sri Lanka Society of Gastroenterology.

Dr. de Silva is currently working with the National Institute of Health Sciences in Sri Lanka on a study investigating attitudes and feasibility of implementing a national colorectal cancer screening program.

Awards and Honors

Faculty from Massachusetts General Hospital and Brigham and Women's Hospital were recognized with awards at American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy and American College of Gastroenterology.





Distinguished Service Award

Brian C. Jacobson, MD, MPH, FASGE



Master Endoscopist Award

Linda S. Lee, MD, FASGE

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2026 ACG Clinical Research Awards

This year, The Institute increased the amount of support for original Clinical Research Awards offering awards in the amount of $100,000 (previously $50,000 per award). In 2026, 3 investigators were funded.



Bharati Kochar, MD, MS
Massachusetts General Hospital; Harvard Medical School
Developing a Patient Decision Aid to Support Shared Decision Making for Older Adults With Inflammatory Bowel Disease

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Advancing Digestive Health, Improving Patient Outcomes

2026 ACG Junior Faculty Development Grant

The ACG Junior Faculty Development Award is a three-year award of $450,000, designed to support a junior faculty member of outstanding promise to establish an independent, productive career in gastroenterology or hepatology. This award of $150,000 per year for each of three years provides salary support for protected time to young investigators at critical points in their career development.



Katie A. Dunleavy, MD
Massachusetts General Hospital
Lifestyle Determinants and Dietary Modulation of the Bile Acid-Microbiome Axis to Reduce Pouch Inflammation in Patients With Inflammatory Bowel Disease

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Upcoming MGH Global Gastroenterology Educational Series

April



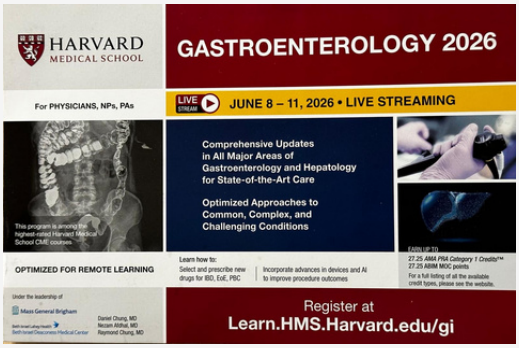
May



June



Upcoming International GI Meetings







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