

# ACADEMIC Newsletter

December 2020

# ECOPH

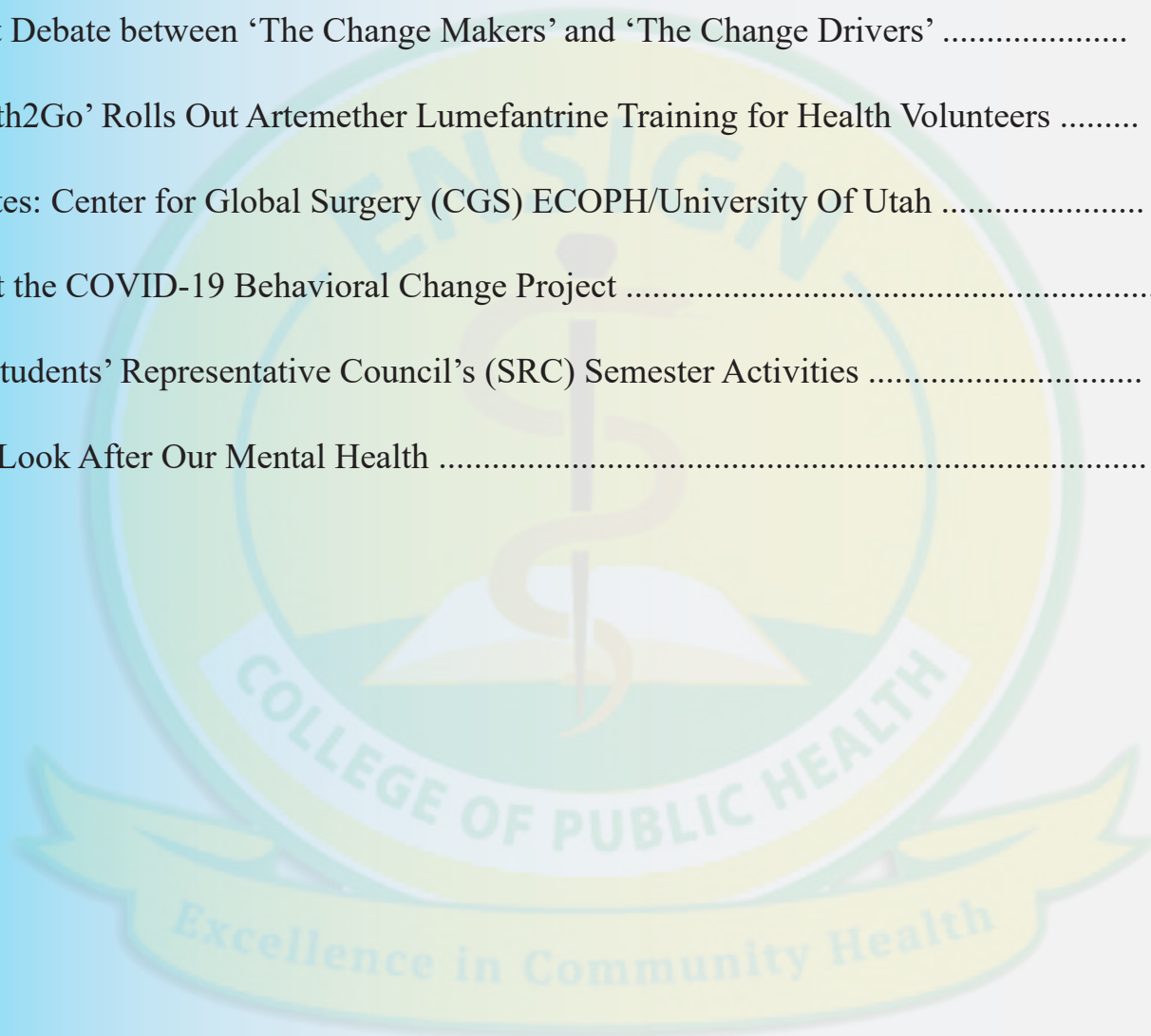


# Season's Greetings



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# THE PRESIDENT'S GOODWILL MESSAGE



Dear Ensign College of Public Health Community:



As we near the end of 2020, we can take great pride in how we have navigated the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic and can look forward with optimism for 2021. We have seen leaders emerge, new connections made with communities, innovations created and quickly adopted, and a greater sense of mission for improving health and well-being. I want to especially note our faculty who have adapted teaching and academic work, staff members who have ensured that all needed operations have remained intact, and students who have adapted to changing learning environments while also taking time to engage in meaningful community service.

We all hope to see resolution of the pandemic in the coming months. What I hope will remain is the strengthened resolve we have developed for staying true to our commitment to make a positive

commitment to make a positive impact on the health of communities and to advance the science and practice of public health. Even as the pandemic subsides, we must be vigilant about the longstanding world health challenges and emerging challenges that require our quick response, innovation, and perseverance. What this year has shown us is that we are prepared to do so! Best wishes for a peaceful conclusion to 2020 and a prosperous 2021.

**Stephen C. Alder, PhD**  
*President, Ensign College of Public Health*

## DR. STEPHEN MANORTEY PROMOTED TO SENIOR LECTURER



Congratulations to Dr. Stephen Manortey on his promotion to the position of Senior Lecturer. Dr. Manortey is the Head of the Biostatistics Unit and the Head of the Academic program. He holds an MSc (Statistics) from Brigham Young University and a PhD in Public Health from the University of Utah. He also holds a Graduate Certificate in Global Health from the University of Utah. Dr. Manortey's research and scholarly works focus on community engagement and evaluating the health needs of residents in rural settings.

He currently serves as a Principal Investigator on a project dubbed "Health2Go" with the aim of establishing a fully operational model to understand the project's impacts on the health of residents in selected "hard-to-reach" communities in the Eastern and Ashanti regions of Ghana with hopes of extending this project to other regions in the country.

*Mr. Michael Blay (Staff, IT)*

# WELCOMING THE MATRICULATING CLASS OF 2020 (COHORT 7)



The College held a matriculation ceremony on Saturday the 28th of September, 2020 to welcome newly admitted students to the Master of Public Health program. In attendance at the event were Prof. Tsiri Agbenyega of the KNUST who also serves as a member of the Board of Governors, the ECOPH president, faculty, the academic registrar, staff, alumni, students and other notable community members. After the president of ECOPH's formal address, Stephen Afakorzi (the SRC president) welcomed the in-coming students and urged them to impact their communities with the knowledge they will gain so people benefit from their capabilities. Prof. Agbenyega then assured the students that at the end of their study at ECOPH, they will be equipped with the knowledge and skill needed to solve public health issues not only in Ghana but in Africa and at the international front. Yaw Osei Owusu, the representative of the matriculating students pledged on their behalf that they would be ready as public health professionals when the next pandemic hits the world.

*Sedinam Adamaley & Curtis Conduah (Students)*

# “Professionalism in Public Health”



ECOPH students were pleased to have Mrs. Irina Ofei visit campus on Friday, September 25th, 2020 as the keynote speaker for the Public Health Seminar themed “Professionalism in Public Health”. Mrs. Irina Ofei serves as the Municipal Health Director for the Yilo Krobo Municipal Health Directorate as well as the Acting Deputy Director of Public Health for the Eastern Region of Ghana. Her lecture was centered on public health practice, core competencies critical for public health successes and some essential character traits public health professionals are to exhibit in society.



## “Innovation in Public Health”

Dr. Koku Awoonor-Williams delivered a lecture on, “Innovation in Public Health” at a second seminar. He is a public health specialist and the immediate past Director for Policy Planning, Monitoring & Evaluation of the Ghana Health Service.

As a health systems and policy analyst, he has almost 3 decades of experience in senior health management. He has also served as a District Medical Officer/Medical Superintendent as well as a Regional Director of Health Services. Dr. Awoonor-Williams’ lecture focused on the ongoing integration of telemedicine into the Ghanaian national healthcare system and the employment of a novel tool, the Community Scorecard system into Community-based Health Planning and Services (CHPS).

*Mr. Michael Blay (Staff, IT)*



# THE 5TH CONGREGATION CEREMONY – GRADUATION 2020

On the 28th of November, 2020 the Ensign College of Public Health held its 5th graduation ceremony. It was a hybrid (on-campus/internet-based) congregation which took into consideration the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic situations in Ghana and with the strict observance of COVID-19 prevention protocols.

The College president, Prof. Stephen Alder and the Founder/ Board Chair of ECOPH, Dr. Mrs. Lynette Gay, linked in via Zoom together with international partners, friends and collaborators. On-campus were the Vice Board Chair, Prof. Agyeman Badu Akosa; the Provost of the College of Health Sciences, Prof. Christian Agyare representing the Vice Chancellor of the KNUST; the key note guest speaker, Dr. Elikem Tamakloe who is the Managing Director of Nyaho Medical Center, staff, students and various other dignitaries.

The ceremony was live-streamed on YouTube. The keynote speaker addressed the fact that the worldwide events of this year 2020 characterized by the COVID-19 pandemic should serve as a wake-up call to the ever-increasing complexity and interconnectedness of the rapidly changing world. To him, the world needs courageous leaders who will step up and serve their communities. He challenged the graduates to live up to the high standards and demands of their profession by serving as answers to the many visible inequities in our healthcare delivery systems and in our societies. Other distinguished speakers from the KNUST, the National Accreditation Board, the Alumni and the Board of Governors also offered goodwill messages.

The MPH degree was then conferred to the graduands and deserving students were awarded for their outstanding performances. Dr. Abigail Ladjer Marnah was the recipient of the community service award; Mr. Henry Okorie Ugorji received the SpringTide scholarship award; the overall best graduating student and the best thesis award went to Miss Rebecca Tricia Morrison. Prof. Alder gave the final speech of dispatch and the congregation was duly dissolved by Dr. Mrs. Lynette Gay. Kudos to the 2020 Graduating Class of ECOPH!

*Kafui Paku & Linda Addae - Badu (Students)*



# SPRINGTIDE SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS



**Curtis  
Conduah**



**Bernice Koiba  
Amoah Ayisi**



**Sedinam  
Adamaley**



**Moses  
Djan**



**Epiphania  
Attah**



**Philemon  
Ametei**



**Henry Okorie Ugorji**

*Seven graduate students at ECOPH were privileged to receive academic scholarship packages from a U.S.-based investment firm called SpringTide Investments. This firm which is constantly looking for breakthrough technologies and businesses that will change the healthcare landscape decided to invest in select students at the Ensign College of Public Health by awarding scholarships.*

*Each of the recipients had demonstrated high academic standing and great potential in leveraging their MPH degree to create great impact in their work and communities. SpringTide Investments challenged the students to be unrelenting in their efforts to improve the health of their families, workplaces, communities and country.*

*Sedinam Adamaley (Student)*

# ALUMNUS IN FOCUS



Augustine Selorm Kumah is an Ensign graduate of the Class of 2017. As a trained nurse with public health expertise, he has had the opportunity of working with various organizations. He was a project officer in the Eastern Region of Ghana with the Global Fund NFM II Strengthening Community Systems (CSS) Intervention for Key populations (TB, HIV and Malaria).

He is a Youth Leader for Health (YL4H), Youth Advocate and Trainer and has been involved in youth mentorship and engagement, behavior change communication and advocacy for adolescents especially in Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), TB, HIV and Malaria.

The YL4H is a joint program by WACI Health, RESULTS UK, Health Promotion Tanzania-HDT, Hope for Future Generations (Ghana), and CISMAT- SL (Sierra Leone) with support from Comic Relief. The program brings together 25 Youth Leaders from Tanzania, Sierra Leone and Ghana passionate about health and healthcare systems. Augustine represents Ghana. He is also on a World Bank Scholarship for his PhD in Public Health (Reproductive and Family Health) at the College of Medicine – Department of Community Health, Centre of Excellence in Reproductive Health Innovation (CERHI), University of Benin, Edo State, Nigeria.

Currently, he has been engaged as the Quality Improvement Manager of the Nyaho Medical Centre, Accra – Ghana. The Nyaho Medical Centre is a hospital facility that provides high quality health care services to the general public, and its client base includes individuals, corporate bodies and international agencies.

His primary role is to oversee the development and revision of organizational, clinical, health and safety policies and procedures to include regulatory changes that concur with national and international standards. *“I am most appreciative of the great education and exposures presented to me whilst a student at the Ensign College of Public Health, my alma mater. I continue to keep touch with this great institution. Ensign is simply the best Public Health College in Ghana”*

*Mr Augustine Kumah*

## A HOT DEBATE BETWEEN ‘THE CHANGE MAKERS’ & ‘THE CHANGE DRIVERS’

To facilitate team building in academic and extra-curricular activities between and within cohorts, students at ECOPH were assigned to activity clubs: ‘The Change Makers’ and ‘The Change Drivers’, with each group led by a team captain. A campus debate was organized on Thursday the 19th of November, 2020. This saw the two teams battle out on the contemporary topic, *“Will people change their protective behaviors in health and hygiene due to COVID-19?”*



Both teams – the Change Makers and Change Drivers performed very well resulting in a draw. This campus community engagement activity was very much enjoyed by all present.

*Dr. Edward Kofi Sutherland (Faculty)*



## **'HEALTH2GO' ROLLS OUT ARTEMETHER LUMEFANTRINE TRAINING FOR HEALTH VOLUNTEERS**

The Health2Go program agenda is to train and equip Community Health Volunteers who reside in the community setting to assess and treat childhood illnesses such as malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea with readily available inexpensive medicines. The program aligns with the Ghana Health Service's national strategy of helping improve access to healthcare in communities with focus on children under-5 years of age and their families/communities.

Periodic training of community health volunteers is one of the important initiatives of the Health2Go program. Adequate training and evaluation is considered key to ensure health volunteers perform well, are motivated, and have well-defined roles in the community in relation to the health system. Effective and regular training and supervision could potentially help meet the challenges unique to each community volunteer, especially in the context of tasks volunteers undertake.



In relation to this development, a periodic refresher training workshop is organized for the community volunteers to ensure that technical challenges of the volunteers are continuously identified and in turn addressed to enhance their performance with respect to healthcare delivery in their various communities.

*Facilitator leading a session on AL medication administration during BCCDP training*



In this regard, a refresher training session was organized for community health volunteers in the Wawase CHPS Zone and Barekuma Collaborative Community Development Project (BCCDP) Site of the Health2GO Project on 17th August and 24th September, 2020 at the Wawase and BCCDP sites respectively.



*A Facilitator (L) and a CBA (R) leading a session on AL medication administration during Wawase CHPS training*

A total of 27 Community Based Agents (CBA) from the BCCDP and 10 CBAs from the Wawase site participated in the training. Facilitators for the respective sites delivered presentations on fever and malaria, outlining the causes, symptoms, and prevention. They further enumerated the various danger signs of fever in children while inviting questions and contributions from volunteers. An extended session on Artemether Lumefantrine (AL) use as malaria treatment was comprehensively discussed. CBAs were taken through the usage of AL for malaria treatment. They then took turns to ask questions and seek clarification on the use of the drugs for children between 2 months and 5 years of age.

***Mr. Gideon Kwarteng Acheampong (Project Coordinator, H2GO)***

## **UPDATES: CENTER FOR GLOBAL SURGERY (CGS) ECOPH/UNIVERSITY OF UTAH**



*Dr. Meghan Mali*

Dr. Meghan Mali, a 4th year surgical resident of the University of Utah in July 2020 began work with the team as a Research fellow. She is a Fulbright Award recipient and will be involved primarily in CGS Women's Health projects. Meghan looks forward to working with Ensign Students on CGS projects.

Dr. Raymond Price, the erstwhile Director for CGS - University of Utah has been promoted to the position of Vice Chair Global Health, at the department of Surgery, University of Utah. Dr. Sudha Jayaraman (MD, MSc, FACS), a Professor of Surgery in the Division of General Surgery

took over the role of the Director of the Center for Global Surgery at the University of Utah in August,2020. She has authored numerous publications on injury in low-and-middle income countries. She is an author and peer-reviewer for the Cochrane Systematic Reviews Injury Group and a collaborator and co-author of numerous papers on Global Burden of Disease by the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. She has been funded by the NIH, Rotary Foundation and DOD for domestic and global trauma research. She is very much excited to join in this collaboration.



*Dr. Sudha Jayaraman*

## **CGS : Quality initiatives in Surgical Care Systems**

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the quality initiatives collaboration program between the CGS and the Volta River Authority Hospital, Ltd continued. The Eastern Regional Health Directorate of Ghana showed great interest in the outcomes of this international collaboration and visited with the team during an online workshop session. This expressed interest could see the possible implementation of our collaborative quality initiative strategies in some hospitals in the Eastern Region.

## **CGS : Minimally Invasive Surgery**

Our MIS initiatives are set to be reinstated hopefully early next year when travel bans from the University of Utah due to COVID-19 have been lifted. Scheduled visits are in the pipeline for 2021 which will see the exchange of surgical knowledge and expertise between surgical systems of the Volta River Authority Hospital, the Cape Coast Teaching Hospital and the University of Utah as well as other interested partners.

## **CGS : Women's Health Initiatives (Breast /Cervical Cancer Care)**

In October, 2020 the CGS actively worked with ECOPH students to develop social media content to create awareness on early detection of breast cancer and to help diffuse common myths surrounding the disease. CGS also supported ECOPH students through the ESRC in a community outreach program on breast cancer sensitization at a nearby local church. The CGS executive team also successfully connected with the executive leadership of the Breast Society of Ghana (BSOG) this year and are exploring ways of collaboration towards the achievement of mutual goals.

**Research projects:** The nationwide assessments and mappings of breast and cervical cancer services in Ghana and the Gambia have seen significant progress. The Ministry of Health in the Gambia and other key stakeholders have been very supportive of the research in the country of The Gambia. With the data collection completed, analysis and interpretation have been done with findings to be communicated at selected conferences. For the Ghana study, the data collection (which was paused in relation to COVID-19) was reactivated 30th November, 2020 and is far advanced with research assistants redeployed in all regions with strict observation of COVID-19 preventive protocols. The Ghana Health Services still remains a strong and supportive partner in this all important nationwide research exercise.

*Dr. Edward Kofi Sutherland (Faculty)*

## ABOUT THE COVID-19 BEHAVIORAL CHANGE PROJECT



This is a project with a team that comprises of the Ensign College of Public Health, Engage Now Africa [ENA] and Health2Go combining efforts to effectively combat COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. In relation to COVID-19, the effort has had two parts that work synchronously together. The first initiative focused on engaging communities in evidence-based social interventions that lead to behavioral change. The second initiative involved the development of a highly accessible multi-faceted digital platform that pushes and

pulls knowledge from the community related to health and the impact of COVID-19 on the community. During engagement with the community, field workers were trained in May 2020, baseline data collected in June 2020 and training materials developed to educate eight (8) selected communities in three (3) regions of the country: Eastern, Ashanti and Volta. The team also worked together with community stakeholders to help combat the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Intervention materials in the form of educational posters/fliers and face masks to the vulnerable were distributed. Ensign handwashing basins were also placed in strategic locations. The aforementioned ensured community engagements on adherence to COVID-19 prevention which underlined the team project dubbed: “COVID-19 Behavioral Change Project.”

The intervention took place between July and August 2020; evaluation of the project was conducted between September and November 2020 and data were analyzed.

Two models, the trans-theoretical model (TTM) and the health belief model (HBM) were adopted to study the stages of behavioral change and its associated variables. Comparisons before and after intervention were made in the TTM for pre-contemplation, contemplation, action and maintenance. Also, comparisons for the HBM



were made for perceived threat, barriers, benefits, efficacy and cues to action. The findings (using a structural equation model), showed a remarkable change in behaviors after the intervention. Specifically, there were improvements in: handwashing, use of hand sanitizers, social distancing, avoidance of crowded places, use of face masks and self-quarantine practices as well as knowledge on COVID-19 symptoms.

*Dr. Reuben Esena (Faculty)*

## THE STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL'S (SRC) SEMESTER ACTIVITIES.



The public health arena is a unique area of study which provides great opportunities for those who enjoy helping others. The ESRC from August to December, 2020 has reached out to the communities around ECOPH to touch lives, especially in this pandemic era with the aim of mitigating the spread and the impact of COVID-19. The student body embarked on a mass fundraising for a nose mask and hand sanitizer distribution exercise. Against all odds, the ESRC raised funds to procure a little above 1,000 nose masks and about 500 hand sanitizers which were

distributed to selected communities in and around Kpong on the 21st of August, 2020. Some beneficiaries were the Nursing and Midwifery Training College at Odumase, the Krobo State College, the Akuse Methodist Senior High School and the Kpong Methodist Junior High School among others. Within this same time period, the ESRC also received recognition and was registered as a member institution of the National Association of Public Health Students Ghana (NAPS-GH). Some members of our ESRC executive body got nominated to serve as national executives as well. On the 29th of August 2020, the ESRC in collaboration with Axis Pension Trust organized a virtual seminar on the theme, “Financial Literacy and Independence” for the student body, members of the Ensign community and other invited individuals. This was a well-attended programme.

For the matriculation ceremony of the in-coming students (cohort 7), the ESRC in a bid to make their welcome most memorable sponsored a themed backdrop decoration for them. We also offered special gifts to the new students in commemoration of this event which was climaxed in the evening with an elaborate Freshers’ Welcome Party intended to foster socialization and interaction among students of both cohorts. COVID-19 protocols were strictly observed.

The ESRC with the support of the Center for Global Surgery of the University of Utah, Engage Now Africa, Health2Go, SendGhana and some individual sponsors marked the Global Handwashing Day and Breast Cancer Awareness month of October with a programme at the Zimmerman Presbyterian Church at Odumase-Krobo. Participants were taken through Breast Cancer awareness talks/ lectures and hand washing lessons geared towards reducing the spread of COVID-19.

This was later followed by another mini face mask and educational material distribution drive at the Somanya market and the Lasi market on the 7th and 13th of November, 2020 respectively. As the tenure of the current ESRC executives is drawing nigh, elections for new ESRC officers were conducted. The following individuals, now occupy the respective offices as interim executives: President - Francis Kwame Dzaka; Vice President - Yaw Osei Owusu; Secretary – Louisa Osei Bonsu; Organizer - Frank Quarshie Ofori; Treasurer - Kuklui Gavua; Gender Commissioner - Philomena Odoom. Following the popular saying that “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy”, the ESRC organized a befitting end of year party for all students to muse over the events of the past months.

The events of the day ended with a movie night. The ESRC wishes to acknowledge the vital roles played by the Academic Registry, Faculty and Staff in various capacities to make the above achievements possible. Long Live ECOPH, Long Live ESRC!

*Stephen Henry Afakorzi (SRC President)*



## LET'S LOOK AFTER OUR MENTAL HEALTH

Like our physical health, it is important that we all care for our mental health in the current crisis. Any change can come with its related stress. Consequently, unremitting intense stress can have a negative impact on one's mental health. Varying psychological responses to the COVID-19 pandemic like panic behavior, collective hysteria, feelings of hopelessness and desperation have been associated with negative outcomes including suicidal behavior by several mental health studies.

Many other psychological problems and significant mental health consequences such as depression, anxiety, stress, fear, frustration during COVID-19 outbreak occurred progressively and ubiquitously due to the uncertainty and unpredictability in its clinical presentation, infection etiology, epidemiological features, wild transmission pattern, novelty and scale.

COVID-19 has triggered a public health response unlike anything seen in the last 100 years. Preventive measures (social distancing, isolation, and quarantine) initiated by governments to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus have been associated with adverse mental health outcomes.

Emerging evidence indicates specific groups could be at increased risk for COVID-19 related mental health problems: those who have had direct or indirect contact with the virus, those already susceptible to biological and psychosocial stressors, and those in the health care delivery professions. Thus, there is an imminent and substantial need for mental, behavioral and psychiatric services for persons at increased risk for COVID-19 related mental health problems. Let us all take the necessary steps in taking care of our mental health.

*Curtis Conduah (Student)*



2021

*Happy New Year*



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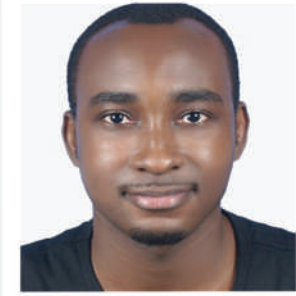
**Dr. Stephen Manortey**  
(Academic Program Head)



**Mr. Patrick Kuma**  
(Academic Registrar)

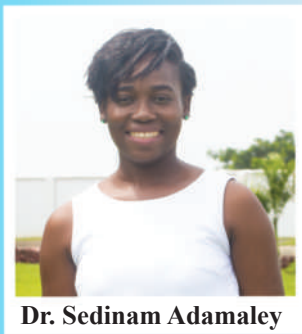


**Dr. Edward K. Sutherland**  
(Editor-in- Chief/Faculty Patron)

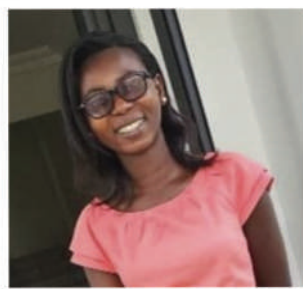


**Mr. Michael Blay**  
(Webmaster)

# STUDENT LEADERS



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(Para-Editor)



**Mr. Stephen H. Afakorzi**  
(Para-Editor)



**Mr. Curtis Conduah**  
(Para-Editor)

*There is nothing more enjoyable than working with a team of open-minded people who are also tech savvy. We took up this challenge excited to bring to our readers updates on activities at the Ensign College of Public Health as well as credible public health information. We could not have done it better than during this pandemic which has taken us on a rollercoaster ride through “Surviving the Odds” to this current edition, “Season’s Greetings”. It was mind blowing reading the several articles and poems we received from our community. Being on the editorial board has shaped our thinking and improved our reviewing skills. I am grateful especially to my team members and faculty/staff for their support.*

*Sedinam Adamaley (Managing Editor)*