



SSI: Riding the Wave

What a year it has been! The world changes around us, catalyzed by technology empowering young generations who strive for a promising future. Within that change, the Sustainable Sciences Institute continues to re-shape its operations as it evolves over the dozen years of its existence. Our annual newsletter will be sent out now in the summer as the sole printed mailing we will put forth. All other communications, alerts, fundraisers and contacts with our supporters will be by social media. We hope this change streamlines our resources and engages a new generation of scientists and global citizens that will be encouraged to support our work. We thank you for your continued sponsorship.

We are thrilled to report that we are now legally incorporated as an international NGO in Egypt, and we are excited about our progress in this country that has kindly hosted us for over 12 years. With a new laboratory in Menoufia and with the support of long-term donors and local partners, we will continue to advance research and capacity building on the issue of Hepatitis C in the years to come.

Our office in Managua, Nicaragua, continues to coordinate a number of dengue studies that include the longest-running continuous pediatric cohort in the world, a longitudinal hospital-based study, and a Randomized Controlled Trial on community-based "green" approaches to dengue prevention and control; all funded by NIH and/or international foundations. Also, we are very excited that SSI has expanded its studies on tropical influenza and is managing a five-year pediatric cohort study funded by the NIAID and partnering with the CDC to conduct a birth cohort study on influenza burden. SSI-Nicaragua also continues to lead numerous initiatives on e-health in partnership with public and private local and international organizations.

Finally, SSI's capacity building program continues to be in high demand, with requests for trainings from El Salvador to Liberia. Please send your donations to enable us to continue fulfilling this need.

-Josefina Coloma

Dengue and Influenza Studies in Nicaragua

Year seven of SSI's community-based Pediatric Dengue Cohort Study (PDCS) and year five of the hospital dengue study has kept the Nicaraguan staff of SSI busier than ever. This year SSI began managing a five-year Pediatric Influenza Cohort Study (PICS) funded by the NIAID-NIH through the University of California, Berkeley with Drs Eva Harris and Aubree Gordon leading the study, with the aims of characterizing the burden and seasonality of influenza and determining possible risk factors for the disease in a tropical country. This study integrates participants from our ongoing dengue pediatric cohort and adds a household transmission study. Through a contract with the CDC in Guatemala, an infant cohort (0-2 y/o) will also be studied, as they have the largest burden of influenza and respiratory disease in Nicaragua.

The PICS has thus far provided a unique opportunity to investigate influenza in a tropical setting. Seasonality was typically thought to be limited to temperate zones, and very poorly understood in the tropics. Much to the surprise of the scientific community, our study found that Nicaragua does indeed experience strong seasonality, with an influenza season lasting from May to September with peak activity typically in June and July.

As such, we have continued to collect our Annual Health Blood Sample for both the PDCS and PICS, but it has been moved from the summer to March-April to avoid overlap

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Information Communication Technologies for Health: Appropriate e-Health Tools

Our informatics team in Nicaragua, led by William Avilés and Heather Zornetzer, continue to support SSI study sites with appropriate Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The public primary care clinic Centro de Salud Sócrates Flores Vivas, the Ministry of Health's Centro Nacional de Diagnóstico y Referencia laboratories, and the National Pediatric Reference Hospital Manuel de Jesús Rivera are implementing applications for electronic patient records, laboratory information management, and mobile data collection. These novel tools will greatly facilitate work and information flow efficiency, as well as improve the quality of information used in daily operations by health personnel and the support staff.



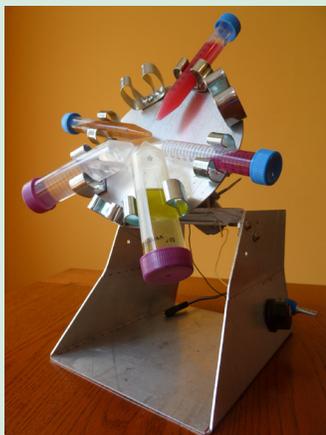
Utilizing health informatics tools

SSI's ICT team grew this year to include Pavel Muñoz and Haldo Samoza, senior software developers, and Souyen Sanchez, a junior software developer and former student intern with SSI. Along with Brenda Lopez, Magaly Amador, Douglas Elizondo, and several project-specific data entry personnel, all members of the team are actively involved in engaging with international counterparts as well as student interns in health informatics in an effort to build local capacity to meet the challenges of implementing health informatics tools that strengthen public health research and health care services.

SSI's experience with ICTs -- originally implemented and fine-tuned for dengue cohort

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SSI helping NGOs take off: interview with Tekla co-founder Lina Nilsson



A rotator built by Tekla Labs

What is Tekla Labs?

Tekla Labs is an organization started by scientists and engineers at University of California, Berkeley. We are creating interactive online guides on how to build laboratory equipment using locally available supplies. All equipment blueprints will be easy to follow, quality tested and freely available under an unrestricted creative commons license. Examples of equipment range from magnetic stir plates and incubators to cell culture microscopes and autoclaves.

What inspired you to found Tekla Labs?

The two co-founders of Tekla Labs, Bertram Koelsch and Lina Nilsson, started this Do-It-Yourself (DIY) initiative after traveling and visiting laboratories in South America. They found that many labs lack access to standard commercial equipment that would greatly enhance their research. At the same time, researchers are creating creative equipment solutions to overcome these limitations. We aim to design an interactive platform that will make quality-tested solutions available to labs through the free distributions of detailed equipment blueprints.

How has SSI work helped you with your mission?

SSI has been truly integral to the establishment of Tekla Labs. Through the SSI, we have conducted multiple sets of surveys of potential users in laboratories worldwide, including in Central and South America. These surveys provide essential feedback already at early project stages. For example, we learned what equipment labs need most and are interested in building with the use of Tekla Labs blueprints, either in house or with the help of local mechanic shops. We also conducted with the help of SSI our first on-site user testing and feedback sessions in labs in Nicaragua, were SSI works. Maria Elena at SSI has played a particularly key role for Tekla Labs, providing encouragement, advice and inspiration. Finally, SSI introduced us to Scott McNeil at the De Novo Group, which has become a valuable partner for Tekla Labs. De Novo Group is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that takes promising university research and prototypes and further develops them into viable solutions that address the great challenges of developing regions.

How did you get the funds to attend the AAAS?

Two members of the Tekla Labs team attended the AAAS annual meeting in Washington, DC in February 2011. The meeting theme was "Science Without Borders." The funding for the trip came from a travel stipend awarded at the white paper competition.

What is your long term goal?

Tekla Labs wants to become an interactive online resource where researchers can access easy-to-follow, quality-tested blueprints for building standard laboratory equipment. Our long-term goal is to empower scientists all over the world in educational and research settings ranging from universities to high schools to independent research labs. Local challenges require local solutions. Tekla Labs wants to enable scientists to build their own infrastructure.

Are other people involved?

Currently, eight researchers at UC Berkeley and UC San Francisco are part of the core team of Tekla Labs. In addition, the local chapter of Engineers for World Health is test-building equipment for us. The lab of Dr. Manu Forero Shelton at Universidad de Los Andes in Bogota, Colombia, is documenting the in-house construction of a surface plasmon resonance instrument for Tekla Labs.

Any message you want to convey to the SSI NL audience?

Tekla Labs welcomes input from readers of the SSI Newsletter. To find out more, volunteer or to share your own equipment solutions, email us at info@teklalabs.org or visit www.teklalabs.org.

Update: In May 2011 Tekla Labs won first prize at the Big Ideas at UC Berkeley competition for social enterprise! The funding received will help Tekla get a reasonable number of equipment designs ready.



CAMINO VERDE: A Green Road for Dengue Control in Nicaragua

SSI, in collaboration with the international NGO, CIET (www.ciet.org) is participating in a three year randomized controlled cluster trial in 30 barrios of Managua, to reduce dengue risk through evidence-based community mobilization. The study supported by the UBS foundation is also being conducted in parallel in Acapulco, Mexico. In the first year, the study conducted a measurement cycle to establish the study baseline. The measurement included both socio-economical and beyond KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice) household data (gathered by CIET) and serological evidence of den-

gue infection of children (conducted by SSI) in 60 barrios including 8,402 households, and 41,738 residents in 7 districts of Managua. In the second year, barrios have been randomized for participation in the community/neighborhood leadership developed interventions. We are thrilled to be part of this transformatory project, that empowers the communities not only to defend themselves from the mosquito vectors that transmit dengue but to find their own voice in society. For more information: http://www.hhmi.org/biointeractive/disease/barrios_battling_dengue.html

Capacity building with SSI: eleven years and counting

The day-to-day life of a bench scientist can get lonely -- at least that is what I felt after 25 years dedicated to laboratory-based research; my work lacked meaning and ceased to fulfill me. It all came into focus when the professor I worked with inquired about my future career goals. What I really wanted was to help others. I wanted to give back what I had learned as a Masters student in my native country, Costa Rica, during my PhD training in Houston, and later as an infectious disease researcher in the CDC and at the University of California. My boss urged me to call Dr. Eva Harris, who had just founded a non-profit organization, the Sustainable Sciences Institute (SSI) to do precisely the kind of work I was yearning for. What good fortune, to find the right niche that fit my interest in science, my laboratory expertise, and my goal to share the knowledge and skills I had with peers in less fortunate environments.



Maria Elena and Heather Zornetzer with IT developers at the National Liver Institute in Menoufia, Egypt.

Without much looking back, in May of 2000, I joined SSI as the Scientific Director of its core program, which builds capacity for health research in the developing world. After more than 11 years, it continues to be the most wonderful experience of my life. It has been a road with many challenges exacerbated by the difficulty of establishing a steady funding stream; supporting the creation of “human infrastructure” is not an easy sell, but the rewards have been abundant. Personally, I have learned more about science, collaborations and life in my time with SSI than I ever did before.



Dr Maria Elena Peñaranda handing out certificates at the Manuscript Writing Workshop at SENACYT, Panama, July 2010

Scientists in developing countries, although bright and engaging, do not count with the support and resources available to their colleagues in the developed world. Most organizations dedicated to global health are neglecting a key component in their programs: the need to train local health researchers and professionals to strengthen the local scientific and public health infrastructure. At SSI, we have developed a unique model for training scientists in a wide range of topics, from appropriate molecular biology-based diagnosis to grant- and manuscript-writing, as we respond and adapt our training tools and approaches to our trainees' evolving needs.

One of the greatest satisfactions I have is helping scientists and health professionals that despite their diverse backgrounds or countries of origin face similar challenges. Our work is always rewarded by boundless appreciation and our trainees take full advantage of all the technical and practical training and the coaching they receive from instructors and colleagues working in similar areas. Our peer trainer model hinges on the expertise of trainers from neighboring countries working on related issues. How rewarding it is to help catalyze partnerships among groups traditionally at odds, or ignoring each other, brought together to solve problems and to strategize solutions to overcome common challenges.

I have witnessed the tremendous need for our support in Africa and many neglected sites in the Americas as SSI's workshops have taken me from Latin America to Egypt and more recently to Zimbabwe, Namibia, and Ethiopia. We have trained over 1,200 professionals from 27 developing countries, and our work has resulted in outbreak control, nation molecular diagnostic reference laboratories, multiple publications and funded projects, laboratories outfitted with our material aid donations, and in general greater opportunities for local researchers.

The truth is that SSI can do more, much more. I wish for more financial support of our program so that we can provide seed grants to many more promising health research professionals. I wish to help foster more collaborations between scientists across the globe doing parallel work in similar areas and undertaking common challenges. My wish is for more Centers of Excellence with a critical mass of scientists and essential resources so they can follow their dreams into a healthier world. Help SSI continue with its mission into the future. Your support is needed now!

By Maria Elena Peñaranda

Dengue and Influenza Studies Continue...

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with Influenza season that rolls in around May each year. This newsletter comes at the conclusion of the eighth Annual Sample Collection, which was deemed “the most difficult and complicated in study history,” by both the Director of the Socrates Flores Health Center and the Director of the National Virology Laboratory. In addition to blood, nutritional information such as height and weight, and sociodemographic information was collected, in hopes of determining disease risk factors. Nonetheless, the Annual Sample was as successful as previous years: 93% of active participants were located and sampled, and 276 new participants were enrolled.

In early February, three representatives from the NIH visited Nicaragua to offer a Good Clinical Practices training course for the Nicaraguan study personnel. It required an incredible amount of preparation from the Nicaraguan study team, but given years of experience and organization, the study team passed the assessment with flying colors and further honed their skills in human subjects trainings and proper clinical practice.

All in all, while the year has brought new opportunities in the PDCS and PICS, the hard-working staff rose to the challenge of conducting scientific research amidst a changing landscape and continues to produce reputable, high-quality results.

SSI Workshops and Invited Lectures

2010 Workshops

Special Topic Workshop, Open Source Health Informatics, Granada, Nicaragua
 Proposal-Writing Workshop in Bogota, Colombia
 Manuscript-Writing Workshop in Panama City, Panama
 Proposal-Writing Workshop in Cairo, Egypt
 Proposal-Writing Workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
 Proposal-Writing Workshop in Chiriqui, Panama
 Proposal-Writing Workshop in Los Santos, Panama

2011 Workshops

Special Topic Workshop, Mobil applications on eHealth, Managua, Nicaragua
 Proposal-Writing Workshop in Panama City, Panama
 Proposal-Writing Workshop for Research Centers in Panama City, Panama
 Manuscript-Writing Workshop in Panama City, Panama
 Laboratory Capacity Building on Dengue, San Salvador, El Salvador
 Laboratory Capacity Building on Human Papilloma Virus, San Salvador, El Salvador

Invited Lectures

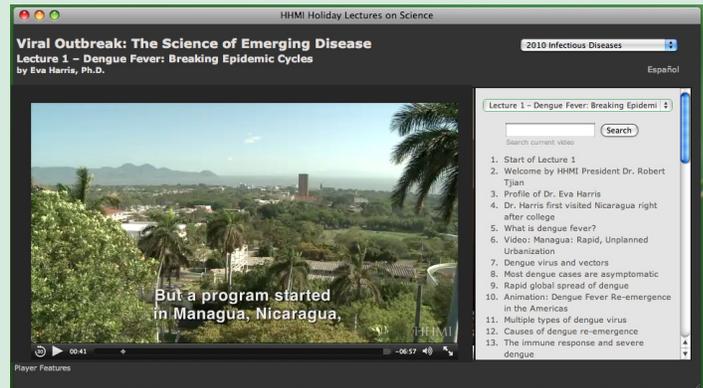
July 23, 2010: Congreso Medico Nicaragüense (Managua, Nicaragua). Keynote: **“Estudios de la Epidemiología, Clínica, y Patogenesis de Dengue e Influenza en Nicaragua: Panorama General”**
 September 17, 2010: Global Health Program, Duke University (Raleigh Durham, NC) **“Partnerships for Research and Capacity Building in Nicaragua: Dengue, Influenza, and More”** (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gl2JfSa3D8>)
 August 11, 2010: Fundación INFANT (Buenos Aires, Argentina) **“Estudios de la Epidemiología, Clínica, y Patogenesis de**

Dengue e Influenza en Nicaragua: Panorama General”

November 8, 2010: Pew 25th Reunion (Duck Key, FL)

“From the Bench to the Field and Back: A Global Approach to Dengue”

December 2-3, 2010: Howard Hughes Medical Institute Holiday Lectures (Chevy Chase, MD)



“Viral Outbreak: The Science of Emerging Disease”

<http://www.hhmi.org/biointeractive/disease/lectures.html>

January 26, 2011: Wednesday Afternoon Lecture Series, National Institute of Health (Bethesda, MD) **“From the Bench to the Field and Back: A Global Approach to Dengue and Influenza”**

June 13, 2011: Inaugural International Conference on Tropical Medicine, Florida International University (Miami, FL)

“Of Mice and Men, Women and Children: Dengue Immunology, Pathogenesis, and Therapeutics from the Bench to the Field”

Thank you to our individual, corporate, and institutional donors!

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SSI's Program in Egypt: Still Going Strong in 2011



Heather Zornetzer with Dr Sameera Ezzat - instructors at the Proposal Writing workshop given by SSI at Childrens Cancer Center, Egypt, June 2010

We are pleased to report that SSI has been fully incorporated as a non-profit organization in Cairo and has full legal status to start hiring employees under the employment laws dictated by Egypt.

SSI's program in Egypt continues strong despite the political upheaval that unravelled in Egypt and several countries of the Arab world. Despite the transitions in power, and political uncertainties we have been able to continue our work with our colleagues in Cairo, Menoufia, and El Minia.

The remodeling of the SSI laboratory at the National Liver Institute (NLI) in Menoufia has been completed and the equipment purchased. We have appointed a scientific committee to lead a team of clinicians and researchers. Dr Mohamed Abdel Rahman, who holds a joint appointment between the Ohio State University and the National Liver Institute at Menoufiya University, and has agreed to be the scientific director and Dr Mohamed Kohla who was the first research

fellow to obtain a scholarship from SSI, trained for two years at California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) with Dr Ed Wakil and Dr Stewart Cooper, will serve as the translational liaison between clinical practice and laboratory research. Dr Sameera Ezzat, one of SSI's grantees, who holds the position of Director of Research Department at the Children's Cancer Hospital 57357, will be also be part of the scientific team. Sameera will serve as research advisor to young investigators in and will assist in setting up a bio-repository at the NLI's new lab facility.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) between SSI and the NLI at the University of Menoufia is in the final revisions and will be signed by the end of the year. SSI remains fully committed to seeing a strong collaborative research center at the NLI led by a team of talented and dedicated young investigators. The program will include several research projects funded by SSI as well as other institutions and the installation of bio-repository for hepatitis C samples.

We are looking forward to our new beginning as a non-profit in Egypt at this particular historical time.

Update! SSI is pleased to announce that Dr Sameera Ezzat has just been awarded the "National Motivation Award" in Medical Sciences, a prize for past research activities, publications and grants.



Mar-Jan Ostrowski (left) interviews lab techs at the SSI Laboratory at the National Liver Institute in Menoufia, Egypt

Information, Communication Technologies for Health...

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study management -- has proven a valuable resource to share and strengthen collaborations between a variety of stakeholders working on identifying health informatics tools with high impact in limited-resource settings. Throughout 2010, SSI's ICT team has provided guidance and support to a range of projects and initiatives throughout the Latin American region related to individual patient medical records for maternal and child health tracking, vector-borne disease surveillance (malaria and dengue), immunization and birth registries, and eHealth impact evaluation. On a visit to Cairo, Egypt, this past year with Maria Elena Peñaranda, Heather consulted on ICT for Health implementation strategies with several project partners of SSI-Egypt. Heather and William participated in a unique international global health course, "Mobile Health Tools in Global Health Research," as part of the 2010 Bergen Summer Research School hosted by the University of Bergen in Norway. Mobile health ICT tools were featured in this hands-on training program, and Heather and William were able to share SSI's lessons learned using PDA's for patient and sample follow up. In August and September 2010, the World Health Organization and the NGO Partners for Appropriate Technologies in Health (PATH) engaged SSI as a consultant through the end of the year to provide guidance to the Guatemalan Ministry of Health to help in the re-design and implementation of a web-based national immunization registry. In November 2010, SSI took the lead again in coordinating and facilitating the 2nd Annual Latin American Open Source Health Informatics Meeting (ImeCA 2010) held in Granada, Nicaragua. This regional meeting and workshop provided a forum for 70 decision makers, implementers and software developers from 17 countries to learn about how strengthening and supporting regional networks of collaborators and researchers working on these issues. This effort is being funded in part by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada.

In an exciting development, SSI recently became the project implementer for a public-private partnership alliance with Ericsson (communications equipment), Claro (mobile provider), and the 4th Sector Health project (ABT Associates, USAID funding) that will for the next two years investigate the potential for mHealth applications to improve maternal and child health in Nicaragua. SSI will work closely with the Nicaraguan Ministry of Health as well as Catholic Relief Services-Nicaragua to implement various kinds of ICT for Health tools to support improved information management of high-risk pregnancies and hopefully help to increase access to key maternal and child health services.



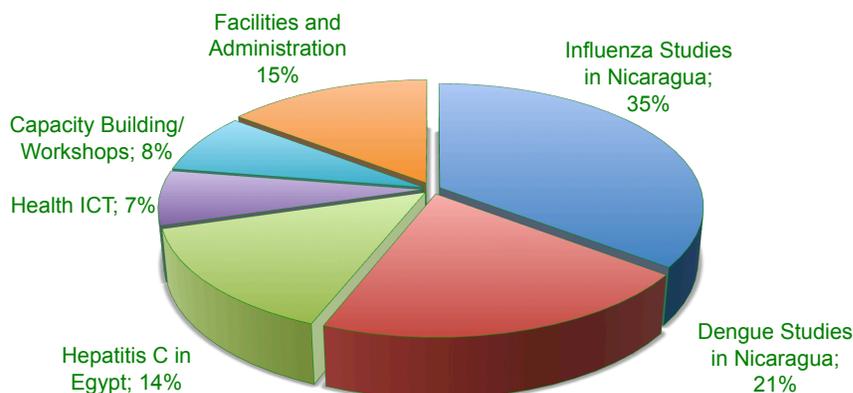
ImeCA meeting, Nicaragua, Nov/Dec 2010

We are excited to operate with a fully funded budget in 2011, but are anticipating a 2012 shortfall for our Capacity Building and Workshop Program. We need sponsors and volunteers to help us raise \$120,000 for 2012.

Join us to keep our core programs of 12 years going.

Please go to our website and donate now!

2010-11 Operational Budget: \$1,393,300



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Sustainable Sciences Institute

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And the many doctors, nurses, lab technicians, drivers and administrative assistants who participate in our work.

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