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Research paper by Andrea Lund '11 published in Metamorphosis

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Research paper by Andrea Lund '11 published in Metamorphosis

Summary: Lund spent a semester studying global health in Costa Rica and researching the relationship between respiratory health and housing conditions among Ngöbe children.

(February 2, 2011)-“Housing Conditions and Respiratory Illness in Migrant Ngöbe Children: A Global Public Health Study” by Andrea Lund '11, Bloomington, was chosen for publication in the fall 2010 edition of Metamorphosis, an online journal featuring the research and writing of undergraduate students studying at institutions that are members of COPLAC, the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges.

Lund spent a semester studying global health in Costa Rica, and the research for her paper was part of the program curriculum. Inspired by observations made while visiting coffee farms, she and classmates developed the project. For cultural and logistical reasons, they collaborating with a local health organization and used data that had been collected on coffee farms for more than a year. Says Lund, “The major lesson I took away from the field experience part of the project was the value of collaboration and the importance of being flexible.”

The research focused on the indigenous Ngöbe population that migrates annually from northern Panama to work on coffee plantations in southern Costa Rica. As stated in Lund’s abstract, chronic poverty and poor living conditions render the Ngöbe susceptible to several health problems. In particular, smoke-producing activities in poorly ventilated houses may predispose the Ngöbe and their children to respiratory illness. A cross-sectional study was conducted to examine the relationship between respiratory health and housing conditions among Ngöbe children. More than 50 percent of mothers reported recent respiratory symptoms among their children. Analyses suggested that crowding in houses, trash burning, and wood burning increased the likelihood of respiratory symptoms.

The population studied, reflects Lund, was one of the most vulnerable she has ever encountered. “I think its important to acknowledge that despite the incredible progress of medical science in recent decades to treat and prevent many diseases, many of the world’s sick are afflicted with ailments that are entirely preventable with measures as basic as adequate housing and sanitation.”

Lund is honored to represent Morris in the COPLAC publication, and acknowledges faculty’s role in her success.

“More than anything,” she says, “it’s a testament to the academic support I’ve received from faculty. I have gained a lot of direction at Morris, and my professors in both biology and Spanish have always encouraged me to flesh out my interests and pursue opportunities like this. In this instance, Karen Mumford, assistant professor of biology and environmental studies, encouraged me to submit a research paper I wrote during my semester abroad. At the time, the process of revising for submission seemed like more work than I had time for, but she spent time working with me to improve the clarity of the project and its results. Without her help, I probably wouldn’t have submitted it.”

After graduation, Lund plans to pursue a master of public health in epidemiology. “This is a field that I’m really excited about,” she states. “It puts science in context and acknowledges important factors—social, environmental, cultural, etc.—that influence the pathology of disease. My experience in Costa Rica has increased my enthusiasm. Both classroom and field experiences during my semester abroad demonstrated how exciting and challenging it can be to ensure the health of diverse populations, and I’m excited to garner the practical skills as a graduate student to start tackling these challenges head-on as an epidemiologist.”

Lund’s research paper can be read [online](#).

Photo: Andrea Lund '11

Photo credit: Matt Privratsky '11

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