

PHR STUDENT PROGRAM

Letter from the Co-Chairs



Above: Featured speakers at the [2020 PHR National Student Conference](#), hosted virtually by the CUNY School of Medicine. Read more about it on page 5!

On behalf of the 2020-2021 PHR Student Advisory Board (SAB), we are excited to share our Spring 2021 newsletter with you. We hope you and your families have remained safe and well since our last newsletter went out in September 2020.

From COVID-19 vaccine distribution, to the new Biden administration in the United States, to civil conflict in Myanmar, and more, we recognize the enormous challenges – while looking forward to the possibilities – that we face in securing health and human rights across the world in 2021. Even with the difficulties that 2020 presented, the medical student community has exploded with activity to advocate for communities worldwide. Nearly two dozen medical school chapters joined PHR’s network, asylum clinics are growing at unprecedented speed, and our advocacy efforts are touching a broader range of crises than ever before. We encourage anyone interested in PHR’s work to contact us with any inquiries you may have to [get more involved](#).

The SAB is also exploring new ways to engage more deeply with our chapters – including recent and upcoming [webinars](#) geared specifically towards medical students. We encourage you to join these events to learn more about our ongoing advocacy efforts and how you can get involved in such work. Additionally, we frequently share the [advocacy campaigns](#) that PHR sponsors and anticipate a great need for medical student support with these efforts in the coming year.

While we are delighted to share PHR’s work with you, more importantly, we would like to hear from our chapters! You can find our [contact information](#) on the final page of this newsletter, and we would be happy to connect you with any of our committee members for further guidance or advice. Enjoy perusing!

Mike Dorritie & Michelle Munyikwa, PHR SAB Co-Chairs

Fall 2020 – Winter 2021

Contents

- Letter from the Co-Chairs 1
- Apply to the 2021-2022 PHR Student Advisory Board 2
- Apply to Host the 2021 PHR National Student Conference 2
- PHR Advocacy Campaign: The People’s Vaccine 3
- Recent PHR Reports & Actions 4
- 2020 PHR National Student Conference Recap 5
- Advocacy Initiatives 6
- Asylum Clinic Initiatives 7
- Announcing Our “Project of the Year” and “Emerging Leader” Award Winners! 8

Connect with us on social media!



Physicians for Human Rights
National Student Program



@phr.students



@PHR_Students

Apply to the 2021-2022 PHR Student Advisory Board!

The Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) Student Advisory Board (SAB) is a group of medical students charged with coordinating and overseeing the PHR Student Program, which is comprised of student chapters at medical schools across the world. By coordinating between PHR student chapters and the PHR national office, the SAB aims to strengthen and grow a medical student movement that furthers PHR's goals and promotes medical students' training in human rights work.

SAB members are expected to be self-starters and motivated individuals invested in developing and strengthening the PHR Student Program. Members of the SAB are expected to excel in oral and written communication, time management, and teamwork; they should also be motivated to continue to grow in these areas throughout their time on the SAB.

- **Qualifications:** Rising second-, third-, or fourth-year medical student
- **Key responsibilities:**
 - Commit 5-10 hours monthly to SAB business
 - Engage responsively to SAB business
 - Attend the SAB annual retreat in late summer
 - Attend and assist in execution of the annual PHR National Student Conference
- **How to Apply:** Complete the application, found [here](#) on our website, and submit to phr.sab@gmail.com
- **Deadline:** Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Questions? Please [review the application page](#) on our website or contact us at phr.sab@gmail.com.

Apply to Host the 2021 PHR National Student Conference!

Are you interested in hosting the 2021 PHR National Student Conference? Please consider submitting an application, which you can find [here](#) on our website, by Wednesday, April 21, 2021! The selected host will be announced in May 2021, and the conference will take place in November 2021.

While COVID-19 vaccine distribution remains unclear, our team will plan flexibly with yours throughout the year to determine whether a virtual or in-person conference is feasible. Either way, we are excited to review your proposals and see which topics your chapter would like to tackle at this year's conference!

For ideas and inspiration, check out our recap of last year's conference, hosted virtually by the CUNY School of Medicine, on page 5 of this newsletter. You may also view [video recordings of last year's conference](#) on our website.

We look forward to reviewing your application and meeting together (hopefully in person) in November 2021!

- **Qualifications:** Host institution must be a U.S. MD or DO medical school
- **How to Apply:** Complete the application, found [here](#) on our website, and submit to phr.sab@gmail.com
- **Deadline:** Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Questions? Please [review the application page](#) on our website or contact us at phr.sab@gmail.com.

COVID-19 Webinar Series



PHR is using global digital platforms to elevate the voices of health care professionals on the front lines. Launched in March 2020, [PHR's webinar series](#) aims to educate advocates and health providers alike through the COVID-19 pandemic. [Sign up here](#) to receive invitations to future webinars.



Click the picture above for more information

Join PHR's Advocacy Campaign: The People's Vaccine

To truly get the COVID-19 pandemic under control, vaccine production and distribution must be fair, widespread, and equitable. In applying a human rights framework to the life-saving production and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) is calling on all governments – whether acting alone, in concert, or through international institutions like the World Health Organization – to prioritize the following three areas:

- **Protecting frontline health care workers** who continue to risk their health and safety to treat and protect others;
- **Protecting marginalized and historically disadvantaged communities** who are most at-risk and least likely to be protected from the virus or treated if they become sick; and
- **Ensuring an equitable global production and distribution of vaccines** by advocating for adequate funding and effective processes for resource-constrained settings to acquire a fair share of vaccines and to ensure free and fair distribution.

As vaccines are rolled out in many – mostly wealthy – countries, PHR is pushing for a just and equitable distribution, grounded in science, ethics, and human rights. A global vaccine will only be effective if no one is left behind.

Moreover, as trainees and practitioners of the health profession, we are responsible for fighting the structural barriers that prohibit poor and marginalized communities from accessing the same health benefits as those in wealthy nations. Our student advocacy team recently published a [letter](#), which you can sign by Friday, March 5, in full support of a proposal that is now before the World Trade Organization (WTO). The proposal would allow all countries to neither grant nor enforce patents and other intellectual property related to COVID-19 vaccines, drugs, and diagnostics until global herd immunity is reached.

Arm in arm, we must stand together to demand vaccine equity now, which is why PHR is partnering with Oxfam America and other leading human rights organizations in **pushing for a [People's Vaccine](#)**. Please **[add your name](#)** now to join us in this fight.

Learn More

View Our Webinars and Conference Recordings

Did you miss the 2020 PHR National Student Conference? No problem! You can find [recordings](#) of the conference sessions on our website. We have also recently released a number of [webinars](#) geared specifically towards medical students, with several others coming up soon. Please [sign up for our mailing lists](#) so you can join us for these events as they arise!

Take Action

Demand Vaccine Equity

PHR is a supporting organization of the [People's Vaccine](#), a campaign devoted to equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution worldwide. As vaccines are rolled out in many – mostly wealthy – countries, PHR is pushing for a just and equitable distribution, grounded in science, ethics, and human rights. Please [add your name](#) to join them in this fight. A global vaccine will only be effective if no one is left behind.

Release Detainees from ICE Detention

According to the latest report from PHR, the health and human rights of detainees in ICE custody have been repeatedly violated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Detainees lack access to basic health amenities like soap and are unable to maintain basic social distancing practices. Please [join PHR](#) in calling on Congress to immediately release detainees in ICE custody and vaccinate those still in detention.

Advocate with a Blog Post or Video

To all interested students: the Student Advisory Board is excited to accept posts for our [student-run blog](#) written by any medical student who wants their voice to be heard! Our perspectives as students and future physicians are powerful, and we want to showcase your ideas and work. The posts submitted and accepted can be about anything related to science/medicine, humanitarianism, or human rights, including the experiences you have had throughout medical school or with PHR asylum clinics. For more information about how to submit a post, please [view our website](#) or contact us at phr.sab@gmail.com.

PHR Reports



[Forced into Danger:
Human Rights Violations
Resulting from the U.S.
Migrant Protection
Protocols](#)



[Praying for Hand Soap
and Masks: Health and
Human Rights Violations in
U.S. Immigration Detention
during the COVID-19
Pandemic](#)



[Silenced and Endangered:
Clinicians' Human Rights
and Health Concerns about
Their Facilities' Response to
COVID-19](#)

2020 PHR National Student Conference Recap

CUNY School of Medicine in New York, NY

Joined by over 400 medical students, health professionals, activists, educators, journalists, and more, the CUNY School of Medicine hosted the [2020 Physicians for Human Rights \(PHR\) National Student Conference](#) on November 20-21, 2020. The conference's theme, "Defending Human Rights in the Age of the Pandemic," emphasized how COVID-19 has highlighted the shortcomings of an inadequate U.S. healthcare and government system with regards to socioeconomic inequities, racial disparities, mistreatment of immigrant patients, and lack of protections for healthcare workers. An overwhelmed healthcare system, combined with government inaction, showcased a nationwide divide, calling attention to disproportionately affected groups, such as asylum-seekers, Black communities, and those who cannot partake in social distancing or COVID-19 prevention measures.

This conference helped prompt a much-needed discussion regarding the intersection of healthcare and government systems that exacerbate the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable communities and provided resources, training, and networks to advocate for human rights. The conference, held virtually for the first time, allowed attendees to participate from several countries, including Argentina, Australia, Canada, Curacao, Grenada, Hungary, Ireland, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The first day of the conference began on a high note with a poster session featuring [29 abstracts](#) presented by doctors, medical students, undergraduates, and high school students. The keynote speaker of the night, [Dr. Abdul El-Sayed](#) – a physician, professor of Epidemiology at Columbia University, and political contributor at CNN – then discussed COVID-19 and racial health disparities, with his session moderated by [Dr. Victoria Frye](#). [Dr. Katherine Peeler](#), a pediatric critical care physician at Boston Children's Hospital, wrapped up the evening with a powerful discussion on the impact of COVID-19 on children and [why medical student advocacy matters](#).

To begin the second day of the conference, [Susannah Sirkin](#), PHR's Director of Policy and Senior Advisor,

and [Dr. Holly Atkinson](#), former Chair of PHR's Board of Directors, opened the conference's second day with an [introduction to PHR's work](#). [Alan Jones](#), Chair of PHR's Board, then welcomed the students to the conference, followed by [Dr. Francisco G. Cigarroa](#), transplant surgeon at UT Health San Antonio, who spoke about [engaging in social justice as a physician](#).

Later, [Janine di Giovanni](#), Senior Fellow and Professor at Yale University's Jackson Institute for Global Affairs, discussed [moral injury](#) through her perspective as a war correspondent. Di Giovanni expanded upon her work during the siege of Sarajevo, the Rwandan genocide, and brutal civil wars in Sierra Leone, among other experiences. Her session was followed by [Dr. Jacques Morcos](#), Professor and Co-Chairman of the Department of Neurological Surgery at the University of Miami, who [reflected on the death of George Floyd](#), American exceptionalism, and race.

That afternoon, attendees were able to choose from several workshops that focused on COVID-19's impact on [gender-based violence and reproductive health](#), [PHR's asylum work](#) at the U.S.-Mexico border, [global refugee populations](#), [Yemen's humanitarian crisis](#), and the [Uyghur Muslim crisis](#) in China. Finally, the afternoon wrapped with two panel sessions covering [attacks on healthcare](#), mistreatment of healthcare workers in the pandemic, and [COVID-19's impact on global healthcare systems](#). One session – led by PHR staff members Michael Payne, Dr. Rohini Haar, and Kevin Short – included a review of [PHR's recent report on crowd control weapon use](#) by U.S. law enforcement, attacks on medics, and post-election safety.

The 2020 Physicians for Human Rights National Student Conference showcased how medical students and physicians can use their platform to advocate, educate, and bring awareness to human rights crises despite unprecedented challenges caused by COVID-19. If you are interested in hosting the 2021 PHR National Student Conference at your institution, please [submit an application](#) to phr.sab@gmail.com.

Yaathika Challapalli is a medical student at the CUNY School of Medicine and former VP of CCNY's undergraduate PHR chapter.

Advocacy Committee Updates: COVID-19 Vaccines, Faculty Highlights, and More!

PHR SAB Advocacy Highlights

Over the past months, the PHR Advocacy team has been working hard to advance medical student advocacy in multiple arenas.

We recently [launched an open letter](#) in support of a proposal before the World Trade Organization (WTO) that would allow all countries to choose to neither grant nor enforce patents and other intellectual property related to COVID-19 drugs, vaccines, and diagnostics until global herd immunity is reached. Please join us in these efforts and [sign the letter by Friday, March 5](#), which will be sent to the office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR), Katherine Tai (President Biden's nominee for USTR), select U.S. senators and representatives, and others.





We have also thrown our efforts behind the [People's Vaccine](#), a campaign devoted to equitable COVID-19 vaccine distribution worldwide. PHR is one of several supporting organizations of the campaign. As vaccines are rolled out in many – mostly wealthy – countries, PHR is pushing for a just and equitable distribution, grounded in science, ethics, and human rights. Please [add your name](#) to join them in this fight.

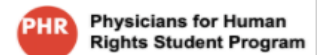
Moreover, we have turned to the U.S.-Mexico border to advocate strongly for asylees during the COVID-19 pandemic. We [launched a campaign](#) aimed at capturing the experiences of asylum seekers over the past 12 months. You may also be interested in viewing Dr. Katherine Peeler's previous webinar [here](#) to learn about how you can support these efforts as a medical student.

Lastly, we frequently update our website to include information about upcoming [advocacy initiatives](#), [webinars](#), and letter writing campaigns. Please [subscribe](#) to our calendar, follow us on [Twitter/Instagram/Facebook](#), and join our [mailing lists](#) so you don't miss any of the critical human rights issues that we are tackling.

Social Media Tips for Medical Activism

How to use Social Media for Activism

-  Post in a timely manner--situations change quickly and people pay attention to the most up to date info + opinions
-  Use trending hashtags relevant to your cause
-  Turn awareness into action by sharing actionable items (petition, donation link, event sign up, volunteer opportunity, share your post)
-  Tag us in your posts + tweets for the opportunity to be reposted by our accounts!



Faculty Highlights – Just Launched!

Are you a medical student or resident looking to pursue a career in human rights work but aren't sure how to take the first step or what options are out there? Check out our first in a series of video biographies from renowned faculty and physicians who have dedicated their careers to human rights reporting from the field. Check back on our [website](#) to hear physicians offer insight into how they developed careers as physician human rights advocates!

Contact Us to Support Your Chapter's Own Advocacy Efforts

Please write to inform us of any advocacy campaigns your chapter is working on so we can amplify your work. Also, please let us know of the human rights issues you think we should be working on! While we as a small team can't focus on every issue, we want to advocate for what is important to you. Email phradvocacy@gmail.com with any suggestions, or submit a [blog post](#) to phr.sab@gmail.com to highlight a major issue!

Fighting for the Vulnerable: Asylum Clinic Initiatives

One of the most impactful programs that our student chapters and affiliated groups take on is the creation and operation of an asylum clinic.

What is an asylum clinic?

A student-run asylum clinic at a medical school is a program that connects PHR-trained clinicians and medical students to asylum seekers and their attorneys. These clinicians conduct forensic medical or mental health evaluations to document signs and sequelae of torture or trauma and report their findings in affidavits that serve as evidence in the client's legal application for asylum. Clinics focus on advocating for their clients, while also training the next generation of physicians to continue this line of work.



For more information:

Email our Asylum & Refugee Committee:
phr.asylumrefugee@gmail.com

Visit our website to access the Asylum Clinic Guide:

<https://www.phrstudents.com/asylum-clinic-guide>

Current Work

At this time, PHR is partnered with approximately 20 asylum clinics at medical schools across the country. The PHR Student Advisory Board's Asylum & Refugee Committee has relationships with over 40 additional clinics, ranging from nascent to fully established. The Asylum & Refugee Committee is committed to supporting all student-run asylum clinics, regardless of PHR affiliation, in their incredible efforts to serve individuals seeking asylum in the United States.

Melissa Baker, Madeline Cohen, Katrin Jaradeh, and Pooja Shah are the 2020-2021 clinic representatives on the Asylum & Refugee Committee. As of March 2021, the committee is connected with:

- 16 clinics in the Mid-Atlantic/Central regions (supported by Melissa Baker)
- 15 clinics in the Northeast/Southeast regions (Madeline Cohen)
- 17 clinics in the Southwest/West regions (Katrin Jaradeh)
- 17 clinics in the New York region (Pooja Shah)

Regional Meet and Greets

The Asylum & Refugee Committee is dedicated to fostering collaboration among student-run clinics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we began hosting virtual meet-and-greets by region so that clinics have the opportunity to connect with student leadership at nearby clinics. These gatherings have enabled clinics to exchange innovative ideas, troubleshoot common problems, and share essential resources. We plan to host additional meet-and-greets this spring, so please stay tuned for a message from your clinic representative.

Upcoming Asylum Trainings

Many asylum clinics hosted virtual training sessions in Fall 2020. Though disappointing to not meet our colleagues in person, it was incredible to see clinicians and medical students across the country learn how to do this important work together. We anticipate that virtual training sessions will continue to be hosted in Spring 2021, so we invite you all to [join our asylum mailing list](#) to stay updated!

Project of the Year: Keck Human Rights Clinic – Client Navigator Program

Keck School of Medicine of USC

On behalf of the 2020-2021 PHR Student Advisory Board, we are excited to award our 2020 PHR Project of the Year Award to the Keck Human Rights Clinic's Client Navigator Program! Developed over the past year, this innovative program aims to provide longitudinal support to KHRC's clients who are seeking asylum in the United States.

Prior to the establishment of this program, KHRC's student observers administered a Needs Assessment at the end of forensic evaluations, whereby clients could indicate their interest in receiving more information about social and medical resources, including housing, food insecurity, health insurance, job training, and childcare. A member of the student board would then provide the client with a list of resources based on their indicated needs and geographic location in their region.

While this format was useful to help KHRC's clients obtain essential resources, the student

leadership of the clinic recognized that this previous structure often placed a significant burden on their clients. Navigating a complicated healthcare system, connecting with various community organizations, and overcoming the logistics required to communicate with medical and social services can be stressful and intimidating for clients. Therefore, the KHRC devised a solution to make this process easier for their clients to navigate.

The result of this initiative became their Client Navigator Program. The program pairs a Keck medical student with a USC social work student, and each of these team members assists a client with accessing any assistance they may need. By helping their clients navigate paperwork, phone calls, and appointments, the student teams help alleviate their clients' burden and improve the success rate at which their clients can access vital social and medical services.

The Client Navigator Program works closely with Melina Castelan, a Senior Program Coordinator at the Wellness Center at LAC+USC Hospital, to connect clients with other organizations and services that already provide dependable assistance to patients at the county hospital. Through the

Client Navigator Program, KHRC is striving to make the process of seeking social and medical support less stressful for their clients and to impart valuable skills in communication, advocacy, and community resourcefulness for medical and social work students. Although this project is still in its pilot phase, KHRC is excited to see how it may serve to improve the circumstances of many of their clients in the future!

On behalf of the entire Student Advisory Board, we are grateful and deeply impressed by the commitment that our chapters have demonstrated to further human rights efforts through your local work. If you are interested in learning more about what types of projects different PHR leaders and chapters are conducting, please visit our website [here](#). You may also contact us at phr.sab@gmail.com with any questions about how we can better support your PHR chapter's projects!

Rhea Fogla, Amy Labar, Veena Mehta, and Francesco Sergi are the Regional Chapter Mentors for the PHR Student Advisory Board.



Keck School of
Medicine of USC

[Click the picture above for more information](#)

Emerging Leader Award: Sheila Okere



After careful review, the 2020-2021 PHR Student Advisory Board is excited to announce that Sheila Okere, MS3 at Ohio State University College of Medicine (OSUCOM), has been selected as the winner of the 2020 PHR Emerging Leader Award! Sheila's commitment to developing OSUCOM's PHR chapter and fostering innovative and timely projects across campus distinguished her among her peers.

Over the past year, Sheila founded OSUCOM's PHR student chapter and spearheaded thoughtful, inclusive projects across their campus. It was through her tireless efforts that their chapter formally joined PHR's network and built a strong sense of purpose and identity within their medical student community.

Sheila employed a unique executive structure and leadership

strategy that allowed all student members the ability to express their human rights passions. By opening these conversations early in their founding, their chapter has established clear direction about the types of projects and advocacy goals that they are most interested in pursuing. Sheila held regular meetings with OSUCOM's PHR executive board, wherein she guided her peers through discussions on their own "passion projects" – offering personal support, professional networking, and tangible resources, and employing her creativity and ambition to propel those projects forward.

Nominated by several of her peers, Sheila's commitment and determination to turn ideas into action clearly stood out. Her peers stated that they were "endlessly motivated by her leadership. If one of us had an idea – from pediatric mental health advocacy to creating a network of research mentors – we took it to Sheila, and she made it happen."

On a personal note, Sheila's own passion project, titled *House Call*, was universally lauded by the administration, faculty, and students that became involved. The project has allowed the OSUCOM student body to regularly connect with those currently or previously in the carceral system – a historically disenfranchised population – and used a framework that could be

applied to other marginalized communities in the future. Through Sheila's efforts, medical students at OSUCOM have begun to destigmatize and create an impactful relationship with this population. As Abby Madden, one of Sheila's classmates, stated, "I can confidently speak for our entire PHR executive board when I say that Sheila has changed our lives and Ohio State ... for the better."

On behalf of the entire PHR Student Advisory Board, we are grateful for each submission that we received this year for the Emerging Leader Award. We remain deeply impressed by the commitment that each of you has demonstrated to further human rights work, especially over this past year. If you are interested in learning more about what types of projects different PHR leaders and chapters are conducting across the U.S., please visit our website [here](#). You may also contact us at phr.sab@gmail.com with any questions about how we can better support your PHR chapter's projects and leadership initiatives!

Rhea Fogla, Amy Labar, Veena Mehta, and Francesco Sergi are the Regional Chapter Mentors for the PHR Student Advisory Board.



Contact us!
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