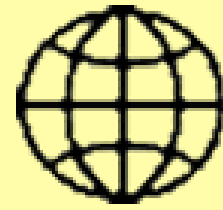


a**l****m****a****Global Health
Graduates' Network****m****a****t****a****Newsletter #1: March 2005****Contents**

Introducing
Alma Mata..... 1

Promises,
Promises? A
Tale of Two
Fors.....2

Modernising
Medical Careers:
The Foundation
Programme and
its Implications
for a Career in
Global Health...3

Medact – taking
action on Global
Health.....5

Alma Mata
Graduate Guide
.....5

Careers Ideas..6

Simplicity
Through
Association,
Come Join
Us!.....6

Introducing Alma Mata...

Alma Mata has been a long time coming. The idea of a global health 'alumni' has been chewed over for some time. Since its launch in 1997, Medsin-UK has gone from strength to strength, with an increasing number of students working on global health issues. The International Health BSc courses in London and Leeds have inspired and enthused many students interested in global health.

After completing the BSc at University College London in 2001, I and many fellow students felt that we needed a direction for this enthusiasm and interest. Back in clinical studies or starting medical careers, it was easy to lose touch with old friends and with developments in international health. I had questions about training, careers, current news and campaigns, and events that I was not hearing about. At the same time, where could I find the time to keep up-to-date?

The responses to an email from Professor John Yudkin in November 2004 confirmed that I was not alone in this sentiment. His suggestion for a global health seniors group sparked a flurry of emails. Simultaneously, Medsin were making plans for an alumni network for graduates. We joined forces to form a global health graduates' network. Alma Mata was born, incongruously, in a side room of the Medsin-Sexpression conference in Birmingham. We have been working hard since then to develop a network which meets your needs, post-medicine, post-Medsin and post-BSc!

The site aims to do the work for you and be a one-stop shop where you can find up-to-date international health news, a calendar of forthcoming events, training and career advice, current campaigns and a communication forum where you can contact other members. You can find advice and links for research, share your work and have help with getting published. There was no sense in duplicating the very good work of other organisations, so the site has extensive links to other sites.

There may be one question still lurking in your mind: why Alma Mata? Our name is of course a glorious (or terrible) pun. *Alma mater* is Latin for the student's former institution of learning, as befits an alumni organisation. In 1978, at Alma Ata, in the former Soviet Union, health advocates and world leaders met, under the auspices of the World Health Organisation, to work towards 'health for all' by the year 2000. The route to this was via strong primary and preventive health services across the world. The plan was admirable; we now know it was also ambitious.

The road to health for all would never be smooth, but I will borrow a phrase to say that all marvellous journeys begin with one small step. We hope Alma Mata is one step in the right direction to support the movement towards health for all.

We thank all those who have supported the launch of this project. Welcome to Alma Mata!

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