

Public Health student, Natalie Griswold, was awarded the Outstanding Student Abstract award at the ASM Microbe conference in Boston, MA June 16-20th. Natalie traveled with colleague, Becky Buxton, who was also involved in the research in Ghana. The award is given to only about 40 people of the 3300 posters presented during the entire conference.

The poster titled "Efficacy of Rapid Diagnostic Tests for Malaria in Children of Rural Ghana". Our research team sought to find how locally available rapid diagnostic tests (RDT) perform compared to the gold standard of microscopy to diagnose malaria parasitemia in children in the Barekese sub-District in the Ashanti Region of Ghana, West Africa. WHO recommends prompt parasite-based diagnosis in all patients suspected of malaria before treatment, but the absence of accurate diagnostic tests can result in the treatment of patients who do not actually have malaria, contributing to overtreatment, wasted resources and drug resistance. Historically, making a definitive diagnosis of malaria required microscopic examination of a carefully prepared blood sample by a skilled laboratorian, but RDTs require no laboratory infrastructure, allowing them to be effectively deployed in rural settings, including private retail drug shops. We found 77% agreement between the tests, which shows that RDT is a fair alternative to microscopy for diagnosing malaria in children of rural Ghana.

About Natalie Griswold:

Natalie Griswold is originally from California, but moved to Salt Lake City 3 years ago to finish her bachelor's degree at the University of Utah. Before moving to Utah, she went on a trip to Uganda with a non-profit organization that runs a primary school and high school that mainly houses orphans. Natalie has always had a passion for helping others and it was after her first trip to Uganda when she was exposed to the vast disparities in health status and access to health services between developed and developing countries. From that experience she chose to focus on public health. Natalie was alarmed at the large gap in access, coverage, fairness and benefits between the rich and poor. Last summer, as a requirement for my undergrad degree, she studied abroad in Ghana and became heavily involved with the research conducted with Dr. Ty Dickerson, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Health, and Dr. Scott Benson, Assistant Professor in Public Health. Communicable diseases are a specific interest of Natalie's because they disproportionately affect the poor, and the burden of these diseases is often unnecessary as many can be prevented and treated with modern medicine. It was after this trip that she decided to pursue a Master's degree in Public Health and is now about to start my second semester of my MSPH degree this fall.

In her spare time, when she isn't working at ARUP, Natalie tries to explore the outdoors of Utah as much as I can, play tennis and sit at coffee shops and drink too much coffee with my good friends.