

MONTANA-MONGOLIAN HEALTHCARE PROJECT

Written by Susan Gibson

In June 2009, the Montana WWAMI Program partnered with MSU BioRegions Program for a third year and participated in a health project designed by local physicians in Renchinlumbe Soum (Township), Mongolia. Mongolia was selected by UW as an International Health Opportunity (IHOP) site for summer 2009 and two WWAMI students, Ciara Huntington and Erica Nees, were chosen to team with the healthcare group from Montana. Other members of the work team were Dr. Katie Woods, Family Medicine Resident Physician from Billings; Undraa Ganzukh and Enkhtuul Dambadarjaa, Mongolian medical students from Health Sciences University of Mongolia (HSUM); and Susan Gibson, WWAMI Program faculty member. All worked with Dr. Purevsuren, director of Renchinlumbe People's Hospital, and other local hospital physicians and personnel.

For 11 years, BioRegions has worked in the Darhad Valley with rural Mongolian communities, seeking to understand their needs and then working together to preserve culture, environment, education, and health. The health group team worked with local physicians to perform screenings for hypertension, depression, urinary tract infections, symptoms of brucellosis and other general health concerns. At the request of the physicians from Renchinlumbe's People's Hospital, Dr. Katie Woods and the health team also conducted a 3-day training workshop for 15 physician assistants from the Renchinlumbe community and three neighboring townships in the Darhad Valley. Topics covered in the continuing education workshops were women's and children's health issues and first aid training refresher topics, such as treatment of fractures, dislocations, burns, frostbite, heat exhaustion and other related medical issues.

The BioRegions Program/WWAMI healthcare team hopes to return next year to Mongolia and maintain working with the Mongolian people to establish a strong and mutually beneficial relationship. Future student exchanges and possible resident and faculty physician exchanges are also priorities. The health team has been encouraged to continue training workshops for the local Mongolian doctors at the clinic, physician assistants and nursing staff in accordance with the priorities of rural Mongolia and especially looking into further testing of brucellosis and other prevalent infectious diseases.

The Montana WWAMI Program hosted the two Mongolian medical students, Undraa and Enkhtuul, who visited Montana for 4 weeks in August and observed physicians in Bozeman and the Billings Family Residency Program to learn about health issues in Montana.