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### **Duke Faculty to Lead NHLBI Global Health Projects in China, Africa**

DURHAM, NC – The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) will support two Duke University physicians as co-leads of two major health projects included in the organization's new global health initiative focusing on chronic heart and lung disease.

Eric Velazquez, M.D., an associate professor of medicine at Duke and director of the Cardiac Diagnostic Unit and the Echocardiology Laboratories in the Duke Heart Center, will co-lead a project based at Moi University School of Medicine, in Eldoret, Kenya.

Michael Merson, M.D., director of the Duke Global Health Institute, will co-lead a Center of Excellence in Beijing, China

The two awards are among ten contracts totaling more than \$34 million that will fund a network of Centers of Excellence in Chronic Disease in developing countries around the world. Each Center of Excellence will have an in-country leader as well as a co-lead at a major academic medical center in the U.S. or Canada. The venture is a partnership between NHLBI and the Minneapolis-based UnitedHealth Groups.

Velazquez will lead the Kenyan center with Sylvester Kimaiyo, MBChB. The project will focus on training researchers and clinicians to better understand the causes and treatment of chronic heart and lung disease, both of which are expected to become more prevalent in Kenya as HIV and other infectious diseases become better controlled.

Moi University School of Medicine has partnered with several universities in the past to develop a large network of HIV services across 40 clinical sites in the region. Services will be offered through that network. Kimaiyo says heart disease is becoming a leading cause of death in Kenya, and there are very few resources available to fight it. "We hope to use this opportunity to conquer heart disease in much in the same way we are doing with HIV," he said.

Specific research will focus on two areas: the prevalence, causes and outcomes of heart failure and hypertension in Western Kenya and the relationship between indoor air pollution and lung disease among women.

Additional staff and faculty members from Duke who are part of the Kenya project include Ralph Corey, Gerald Bloomfield, Kevin Anstrom, Jennifer Li and Cynthia Binanay. Other institutional partners include Brown and Indiana Universities.

Merson will work with Yangfeng Wu., M.D., Ph.D., of the George Institute for International Health in Beijing.

China is the largest developing nation in the world, and has undergone dramatic shifts in the patterns of disease within its borders, with chronic disease now

accounting for nearly three-quarters of all deaths. The NHLBI says blood pressure is the single most important determinant of cardiovascular disease in China, adding that blood pressure control programs may be especially important in the rural and northern regions of the country where salt intake is higher than average.

Under the \$3.5 million grant from the NHLBI, investigators will design and coordinate research projects aimed at heightening awareness of chronic disease prevention in local communities and creating ways to make sure that any change will be sustainable and supported by local health policy leaders.

The project involves additional academic centers throughout China, Imperial College in London, three institutions in Australia: the University of Queensland, the University of Sydney and the George Institute for International Health.

Information on all of the UnitedHealth and the NHLBI Collaborating Centers of Excellence can be found on the NHLBI Global Health Initiative Website, [www.globalhealth.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.globalhealth.nhlbi.nih.gov).

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