

Global Health Newsletter

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Staten Island University Hospital

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Americas

Alabama Executes a Man Using Nitrogen Gas

Since its inception in 1982, lethal injection has been the preferred method of execution in the United States. However, states have encountered increasing problems with this method. In response, Alabama, Mississippi, and Oklahoma have introduced new gas-based protocols. Nitrogen gas is commonly used to euthanize poultry, but the American Veterinary Medical Association describes euthanasia by nitrogen hypoxia as unacceptable, as it can be distressing for some species.

Kenneth Smith, convicted for murder-for-hire for a crime he committed in 1988, was executed in Alabama on January 25th by nitrogen gas. Originally slated for execution by lethal injection in November 2022, the process was halted as IV access could not be achieved, marking the third failed lethal injection attempt in Alabama since 2018. Subsequently, Mr. Smith filed a lawsuit requesting the state to execute by nitrogen hypoxia instead of lethal injection, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit ruled in his favor.



<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/alabama-plan-nation-first-execution-nitrogen-gas-hostile-religion-rcna129683>

This was the first time nitrogen hypoxia was employed for an execution. Alabama's protocol for execution by nitrogen hypoxia involves the prisoner lying down on a gurney and being fitted with a mask through which the nitrogen gas is administered. Notably, Alabama's protocol does not include provisions for sedation prior to execution. Some human rights activists argue that using nitrogen hypoxia for execution violates the international human rights treaty under the United Nations, specifically the Convention Against Torture and the Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons Under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment. These treaties guarantee that no detainee will be a subject to scientific or medical experimentation that may cause harm to health, to which the United States is a party.

Further Reading

<https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/01/1145587>

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/committees/death_penalty_representation/publications/project_blog/alabama-prepares-for-execution-by-nitrogen-gas/

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/united-states-un-experts-alarmed-prospect-first-ever-untested-execution>

Middle East/Northern Africa

UAE Issues New Law on Mental Health

The UAE Government has introduced a new Federal Law dedicated to safeguarding the rights of individuals with mental illness. This legislation is designed to guarantee that all mental health treatments adhere to the highest standards and practices upheld by licensed practitioners. Among its key provisions, the law mandates that patients receive a comprehensive explanation of their rights, including the right to voice grievances and file complaints.

Notably, the legislation mandates maintaining the confidentiality of patient information, ensuring the protection of their right to employment, and safeguarding them from emotional, physical or sexual exploitation. Significantly, employers are barred from making professional decisions based on an employee's mental health condition.

Violations of the law carry substantial consequences, with monetary fines ranging from Dh50,000 to Dh 200,000 (\$13,000-\$55,000 USD) imposed on individuals who breach its provisions.

A key objective of this legislation is to foster a culture where individuals feel empowered to prioritize their mental well-being without fear of facing professional repercussions.

Further reading

<https://hrme.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/uae-issues-new-law-on-mental-health/106251972>

<https://www.zawya.com/en/legal/policy/new-uae-law-employees-cannot-be-fired-from-their-jobs-over-mental-health-conditions-rf02z9rw>



<https://www.lokmattimes.com/health/uae-issues-law-on-mental-health-475/>

Asia/Pacific

Sri Lankan Hospitals Strike

Sri Lanka is currently facing its most severe financial crisis since gaining independence from Britain in 1948 which has caused the cost of living to soar. In response, the government has increased taxes and decrease public employee benefits. As a consequence, the public healthcare system is under significant strain, exacerbated by the migration of many healthcare workers seeking better opportunities.

Recently, the Sri Lanka's Cabinet approved a monthly transport allowance of 70,000 rupees (\$214) for doctors, doubling the current allowance of 35,000 rupees. While this move was intended to address concerns within the medical community it sparked protests from other healthcare workers, such as hospital orderlies and administrative staff. A one-day strike was initiated, with employees demanding a salary increase.

In light of the strike and the ensuing disruptions in healthcare services, hospital directors sought assistance from the military. Subsequently, 615 soldiers and 19 officers were deployed to 25 key hospitals across the country. The soldiers provided crucial non-medical support, including patient transport, record-keeping, and assisting with ambulance operations.

Further reading

<https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/sri-lankan-soldiers-sent-key-hospitals-health-workers-strike-2024-01-11/>



<https://efe.com/en/other-news/2024-01-16/strikeby-workers-paralyzes-sri-lanka-health-care/>

Sub-Saharan Africa

Cholera Outbreak in Zambia

The president of Zambia, Hakaine Hichilema, has urged residents to relocate from specific areas in response to a cholera outbreak. Since October, the reported cases of cholera have surpassed 10,000, resulting in 400 fatalities. More than half of the reported deaths occurred before individuals could reach a healthcare facility.

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) has estimated the fatality rate to be around 4 percent, significantly higher than the typical under 1 percent fatality rate. In Africa in 2023, there were more than 200,000 cases of cholera, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths. The disease has spread to nine out of Zambia’s 10 provinces, affecting nearly half of the country’s districts, with over 400 new cases reported daily.



<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67931876>

In the capital city of Lusaka, there are more than 1,000 patients in the Heroes Stadium Cholera Treatment Center. This soccer stadium has been repurposed into a treatment facility to manage the escalating crisis.

In response to this health emergency, the World Health Organization (WHO) has committed to dispatching one million cholera vaccines in an effort to contain the outbreak. Meanwhile, schools across the country remain closed to prevent further transmission of the disease. Additionally, the Zambian government is taking measures to provide clean water, supplying 2.4 million liters per day to affected communities.

Further reading

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67931876>

Europe

Pope Francis Urges Global Ban on Surrogacy

In an address to global ambassadors during the annual “State of the World” gathering at the Holy See on January 8th, Pope Francis called for a worldwide ban on what he termed the ‘despicable’ practice of surrogate motherhood. The Pope expressed concerns about the commercialization of pregnancy and referred to surrogacy as a ‘rented uterus.’ Emphasizing the need to protect the lives of unborn children, he urged against their ‘suppression’ or transformation into objects of trafficking.



<https://www.axios.com/2024/01/08/pope-francis-ban-surrogacy>

Several European countries, including Spain and Italy, already prohibit surrogacy. In contrast, countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands, the UK, Canada, Brazil and Colombia permit ‘altruistic’ surrogacy, where a woman gives birth on behalf of someone else or a couple without any financial exchange, excluding necessary expenses. The United States allows for commercial surrogacy, with regulations varying from state to state. Ukraine stands out as one of the few countries permitting surrogacy for foreigners, while the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine poses potential threats to babies born to surrogates in the region.

The Vatican, in line with its teachings also opposes in vitro fertilization. The Catholic Church opposes surrogacy and in vitro fertilization because it disposes of some embryos, which it argues equates to abortion.

This declaration is timed one month after Francis approved Vatican policy which blesses same-sex couples. In addition,, the Vatican’s doctrine office states that homosexual parents who use surrogates can have their children baptized.

Further reading

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-12938227/pope-francis-calls-global-ban-surrogacy.html>

SIUH Spotlight

Dr. Tyler Nghiem Travels to Guyana



Dr. Tyler Nghiem traveled to the emergency department in Guyana for his international rotation this month. Dr. Nghiem saw various cases during his time in the emergency department such as polytraumas, osteomyelitis, snake envenomation, and countless obstetric complaints. He worked with the local team to help manage critical patients.

Dr. Barry Hahn and Dr. Boris Khodorkovsky Travel to Israel

Dr. Hahn worked at Barzilai Hospital, a 600-bed facility in Ashkelon, a coastal city in the Southern District of Israel on the Mediterranean coast 8 miles north of the border with the Gaza Strip. The Emergency Department is unique as it is underground within a fortified bunker. His job was to care for wounded Israeli soldiers and Palestinians. Their team was international and consisted of Russian, Arabic and Hebrew speaking Israelis doctors.



Dr. Khodorkovsky worked at Hadassa Ein Kerem Medical Center, a tertiary hospital with Trauma/Stroke/STEMI capabilities located in Israel's capital, Jerusalem. He worked alongside EM physicians with various unique experiences and training. His responsibilities included teaching EM residents and medical students, providing administrative support to ED director and general patient care.

What's New at Northwell's Center for Global Health?

Daniel Leon MBA PMP

Northwell Fertility Expert Travels to Guyana

This past December, fertility specialist Dr. Randi Goldman of Northwell Health traveled to Guyana's Georgetown Public Hospital (GPHC). Joining the Center for Global Health, Dr. Goldman met with maternity specialists to identify areas for advancing obstetrics and gynecological programming through collaboration. She also delivered a new Butterfly IQ+ ultrasound device, sourced by the Center, to improve GPHC's ultrasound capabilities.

Dr. Goldman spent time training staff on implementing ultrasound technology into hospital operations. Shadowing Guyanese counterparts, she offered insight on complex cases to help improve quality of care. Before leaving, Dr. Goldman explored introducing advancements like IVF to Guyana by end of 2024.

Looking ahead, Dr. Goldman plans close work with GPHC this year. Her trip comes as part of Northwell's 5-year memorandum of understanding with Georgetown Public Hospital to improve access to high quality maternity care in Guyana.



Internal Medicine in Guyana

Recently, internal medicine doctor Dr. Rajeev Mehta traveled to Georgetown, Guyana to meet with specialists at Georgetown Public Hospital (GPHC). Joining the Center for Global Health's team, he explored potential collaborations to enhance internal medicine care.

During his visit, Dr. Mehta toured several infectious disease clinics, and consulted with doctors on needed improvements. He discussed modifications to improve mortality rates for dialysis patients.

The Center for Global Health assisted as well, procuring a new EKG machine and BiPAP machine for GPHC's internal medicine unit.



Guyanese Nurse Honored with Daisy Award

Kendra Inniss-Rambarran, a nurse at Georgetown Public Hospital (GPH) in Guyana, was recently awarded nursing's highest global honor - The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses. She is the first recipient from Guyana and only the third ever from GPH to receive this award.

The DAISY Award was first introduced to Guyana by Northwell's Chief Nursing Officer Dr. Launette Woolforde. It recognizes the exceptional skill, care, and commitment of nurses around the world.



Upcoming Lectures/Conferences

Rethinking Humanitarianism | How to step aside to promote change

Podcast: <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/podcasts/2024/01/18/rethinking-humanitarianism-western-leaders-how-to-step-aside-promoting-change>

PODCAST: The Humanitarian Response in Gaza

Dr. Spiegel talks with Dr. Josh Sharfstein about his recent deployment to Cairo, Egypt as a strategic advisor to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for the health response in Gaza.

<https://hopkinshumanitarianhealth.us14.list-manage.com/track/click?u=8861d1b14ebeab609c47010cb&id=70a4e39047&e=0fc91dccb4>