

The Global Voice

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF
MEDICINE GLOBAL HEALTH ALLIANCE
(UMGHA)

*Advancing Vaccine Science and
Global Health Leadership*



Wilbur H. Chen, MD, MS

Editor's Note

This edition of *The Global Voice* features **Wilbur H. Chen, MD, MS**, a leader in vaccine science and global health research at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. At a time when global health research funding is increasingly constrained, Dr. Chen's work and perspective highlight how rigorous science, strategic partnerships, and translational focus can continue to drive impact. Dr. Chen presented a very insightful presentation on ***“Research in Action: Solving the Meningitis Problem in Africa”***, where with his collaborators have demonstrated that the novel pentavalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (NmCV-5) is both safe and highly effective in infants and young children and directly informed the World Health Organization's recommendation to introduce it into routine immunization programs.

by Cathy Mwangi, PhD



Picture of Dr. Wilbur H. Chen, Professor of Medicine, Chief, Division of Geographic Medicine, Chief of Adult Clinical Studies, Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health (CVDGH) with Dr. Cathy Mwangi, the coordinator of the UMGHA

Driving Global Health Impact Through Vaccine Science

At the University of Maryland School of Medicine (UMSOM), Dr. Wilbur H. Chen stands at the forefront of global vaccine research, advancing scientific solutions to some of the world's most persistent infectious disease threats. An internationally recognized infectious diseases physician-scientist, Dr. Chen's work bridges rigorous clinical research, public health preparedness, and real-world application. Through his leadership at the Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health (CVDGH), Dr. Chen oversees high-impact adult clinical trials that contribute critical evidence to the development of vaccines targeting diseases that continue to disproportionately affect populations in resource-constrained settings.

He has been part of major breakthroughs in vaccine development, playing a pivotal role in advancing first-in-human and early-phase clinical trials for vaccines targeting enteric infections, including typhoid fever and invasive non-typhoidal *Salmonella*. These diseases remain major contributors to illness and mortality, particularly among children in endemic regions. A notable milestone from Dr. Chen and his team include the evaluation of a novel combination conjugate vaccine designed to protect against both typhoid and invasive *Salmonella*. These approaches offer promise for maximizing population-level impact while improving efficiency in vaccine delivery.



Picture taken in Kenya with KEMRI-Kisumu partners while on site visit for study of combined typhoid/non-typhoidal *Salmonella* vaccine project. From left to right: Richard Omere, Wilbur Chen, Mike Levine, and Sydney Ogolla

Strengthening UMSOM Global Clinical Research Enterprise

As Chief of Adult Clinical Studies, Dr. Chen provides strategic oversight for a diverse portfolio of vaccine trials assessing safety, immunogenicity, and early efficacy. His leadership supports studies addressing *Shigella*, enterotoxigenic *E. coli* (ETEC), and emerging infectious threats, reinforcing UMSOM reputation as a trusted global research partner. These efforts ensure that UMSOM remains a premier site for rigorously conducted clinical trials while fostering collaborations with international partners, sponsors, and public health stakeholders. Dr. Chen also serves as Director of the UMSOM Travel Medicine Practice, where academic research translates into practical decision-making that informs traveler health, clinician preparedness, and public health response. His expertise strengthens UMSOM's capacity to respond to emerging and imported infectious diseases, contributing to both national and global health security.

Dr. Wilbur Chen in a candid interview with The Global Voice on leadership, funding constraints, and the future of global vaccine research, he reflected that *“when resources are limited, scientific rigor becomes even more important-not less.”* Dr. Chen emphasized that *“we have to be intentional about the questions we pursue and ensure they are aligned with real-world public health impact”*. Dr. Chen also contributes to national immunization policy discussions, helping ensure that evidence generated through rigorous research informs public health decision-making.

Mentorship, Resilience, and Looking Ahead

A defining feature of Dr. Chen’s leadership is his commitment to mentorship and team development.

He underscored the importance of fostering resilience among trainees and early-career investigators, encouraging adaptability, collaboration, and persistence in the face of shifting funding landscapes. Looking ahead, Dr. Chen envisions academic institutions playing an increasingly critical role in shaping globally relevant research agendas, supporting translational science, and training the next generation of global health leaders.

Through vaccine innovation, clinical leadership, mentorship, and policy engagement, Dr. Wilbur H. Chen exemplifies the University’s commitment to advancing global health through science and service. His work continues to strengthen UMSOM global footprint while contributing to a safer, healthier world.



Dr. Chen picture taken at the International Centre for Diarrhea Disease Research, Bangladesh

Sustaining trusted international collaborations, he noted, requires transparency, mutual respect, and shared ownership—especially when funding continuity is uncertain. Through his leadership Dr. Chen has overseen studies generating critical evidence that supports the development of immunization strategies with meaningful population-level impact.

THE GLOBAL VOICE is celebrating Dr. Wilbur Chen and his collaborators’ work that demonstrated that the novel pentavalent meningococcal conjugate vaccine (NmCV-5) is both safe and highly effective in infants and young children and directly informed the World Health Organization’s recommendation to introduce it into routine immunization programs.



Dr. Chen in Mali, during a local village tour for community engagement and introduction before the start of a maternal influenza vaccine project - influenza vaccination of pregnant women.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



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APRIL 7 2026

WORLD HEALTH DAY

World Health Day 2026 – Official Launch of the Global Health Alliance April 7, 2026, will mark a significant milestone for the University of Maryland School of Medicine as we officially launch the **Global Health Alliance (UMGHA)** on **World Health Day**.

This special event will introduce our vision, mission, and strategic priorities, as well as the dedicated team leading this important initiative. We will also take this opportunity to recognize and celebrate the outstanding contributions of our global health researchers.

We are honored that **Dean Mark T. Gladwin, MD**, will join us for this occasion, alongside distinguished international collaborators, members of the UMGHA leadership team, and our Steering Committee.

Time: **5:30pm to 6:30pm** followed by refreshments.

Venue: To be announced later.

As we continue to build and strengthen the UMGHA community, World Health Day will become an annual moment of recognition and celebration of our School of Medicine researchers engaged in global health. We warmly invite all faculty and students currently working in, or interested in, global health to join the UMGHA community and be part of this growing network of collaboration and impact.

We look forward to celebrating this landmark day together.



Global Impact Series Beyond Traditional Funding Aid

Dr. Githinji Gitahi
Group CEO, Amref Health Africa

Amref Health Africa, almost 70 years old, is the largest Africa based international NGO present in over 30 countries in Africa.



Tuesday, March 31, 2026

11:00-12:00 AM Baltimore

4:00-5:00 PM Abuja

5:00-6:00 PM Lusaka, Gaborone

6:00-7:00 PM Nairobi, Dar es Salaam

zoom Meeting ID: 962 1574 9638
Passcode: 517174
Zoom link



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