

Dr. Jennifer Dohrn - Story

One of Dr. Dohrn's most extraordinary current projects is a multi-school study, sponsored by the Columbia University Center for the Study of Social Difference. The study aims to document the experiences of nurses and midwives on the frontlines of the 2014-2016 Ebola outbreak. The effort has multiple goals: to provide these healthcare workers with a safe and nonjudgmental space to record their stories; to gain an understanding of the traumas they experienced and the lessons they learned; to commemorate and honor their contributions, which have largely gone unrecognized; and to summarize and synthesize their narratives to inform new policies and more effective responses to deter, detect, and control future epidemics.

In collaboration with scholarship and leadership across the Columbia campus, at the World Health Organization (WHO), and in West Africa, Dr. Dohrn's team has collected oral histories from 39 participants in Liberia and Sierra Leone. She and her colleagues will return in 2020 to help organize a day of recognition for all nurses and midwives who participated in the Ebola response (many of whom died as a result). Events for this significant day will include museum exhibitions featuring excerpts from the interviews. Later this year, the team will present a roundtable discussion of their findings with global and regional policy experts. A white paper will be presented to the WHO as well.