

## AIHA Celebrates Official Opening of CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab at Debre Berhan Comprehensive Specialized Hospital

*Dr. Joseph R. Masci Legacy Project Supports Transformation of Continuous and Skills-based Learning and Professional Development in Ethiopia's Amhara Region*

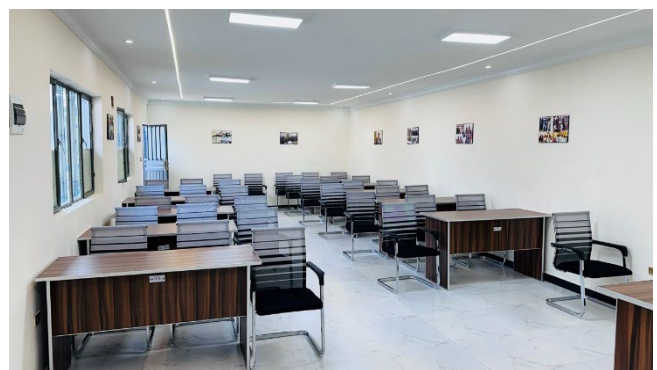


*Kidest Hailu, AIHA Country Director for Ethiopia; Elizabeth Bass, Dr. Masci's wife; and Mr. Bedilu Wubeshet, Mayor of Debre Berhan's City Administration, cut the ribbon during the official opening of the new Nursing Skills Lab and Continuing Professional Development Center on September 25, 2025.*

Healthcare workers are the bridge connecting science- and evidence-based knowledge and sound clinical policies and practices with the patients they serve. Because of this, continuing professional development (CPD) and ongoing skills-based training for medical staff are critical for maintaining proficiency, staying up-to-date with the latest innovations, adhering to licensing requirements, and delivering high-quality, effective patient care.

In September 2024 when AIHA launched the [Dr. Joseph R. Masci Legacy Project](#) with support from his wife and son, we worked closely with the team at Debre Berhan Comprehensive Specialized Hospital (DBCSH) and identified health practitioner knowledge and skills as a key gap to be addressed through the project. During much of the past year, we have worked to improve access to quality, needs-driven, and skills-based training opportunities for health workers at

DBCSH, as well as the cluster hospitals it supports. Refurbishing and upgrading the Hospital's CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab plays a crucial role in efforts to better support quality training and upskilling activities.



*The two photos on the left are before and after shots of the DBCSH's Nursing Skills Lab and the two on the right depict the transformation of the hospital's Continuing Professional Development Center.*

On September 25, 2025, AIHA and DBCSH celebrated the official opening of the renovated CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab with a gala inauguration ceremony attended by hospital leadership and staff, city officials, the AIHA team, and Elizabeth Bass, the wife of Dr. Joseph R. Masci, an infectious disease specialist and public health leader who spent more than 40 years working to improve the lives of patients in New York City and around the world, including in Debre Berhan.

"I am a witness to the remarkable transformation that has taken place at this CPD Center," said Mr. Bedilu Wubeshet, Mayor of the Debre Berhan City Administration. "Previously, it looked outdated and did not meet the expected standards, but today – thanks to the Masci family – the Center has been beautifully renovated and is now fully equipped with the necessary facilities and materials. The Masci family has set an inspiring example by using the opportunities

available to them to serve and save the lives of others. This is a lesson we all should embrace, and we are committed to continuing our collaboration and working hand-in-hand with AIHA and DBCSH to further strengthen our health system.”

DBCSH’s CEO Tilahun Mulugeta said, “Today marks the proud launch of the newly renovated and fully furnished CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab. On behalf of the hospital, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Masci family for their generous and impactful support in the areas where we needed it most. I also would like to thank AIHA for facilitating this initiative and working with us to strengthen our hospital’s services.”

Mr. Tilahun Mulugeta continued, stating, “This milestone transforms our commitment to healthcare excellence into a tangible reality. This integrated hub has been meticulously designed to bridge the gap between theory and practice, moving beyond traditional learning into a dynamic ecosystem of simulation and innovation. With advanced healthcare capabilities and flexible, technology-rich learning spaces, it will empower interdisciplinary teams to master complex clinical scenarios, pioneer new advancements, and build unshakable competence.”

He concluded by explaining that the CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab were more than just renovated facilities. “These are the driving force behind the future of professional development at DBCSH. They ensure that our practitioners continue to lead in safety, quality, and innovative patient care for years to come.”

### **What the New CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab Mean for Debre Berhan**

By offering structured professional development programs, training-of-trainers courses (TOTs), workshops, seminars, and accredited courses, the CPD Center is ensuring staff continually upgrade their knowledge and skills and maintain their credentials to meet all necessary regulatory and professional requirements, according to CPD Center Coordinator Mr. Desalegn Asmare.

“We provide regular briefings and courses on the latest clinical guidelines, evidence-based practices, and emerging health trends, keeping staff current with advancements in healthcare,” Mr. Desalegn Asmare said, noting that trainings offer many skills-building activities, practical



*Mr. Bedilu Wubeshet.*



*Mr. Tilahun Mulugeta.*

exercises, case discussions, and simulation-based learning to strengthen clinical decision-making, problem-solving, and hands-on skills. Competency assessments and refresher trainings help identify gaps in knowledge or practice and provide targeted training to address them, ensuring staff remain competent and confident.

“Our goal is to create a culture of lifelong learning and accountability that encourages staff to take ownership of their professional growth, promotes reflective practice, and fosters commitment to maintaining high standards of care,” Mr. Desalegn Asmare continued.

Eager to put the CPD Center to use, the DBCSH team conducted a number of training courses prior to the official opening ceremony, he said. These included a TOT in Healthcare Quality Improvement; a Motivated, Compassionate, and Competent Care (MCC) course; and trainings on National Patient Safety, ICU Care, Antimicrobial Stewardship, Instructional Design, and Grant Writing. More than 200 healthcare workers participated in these trainings, gaining valuable knowledge and practical skills that will directly enhance patient care and safety.

DBCSH employs 254 nurses and midwives, comprising approximately 40 percent of its entire staff. Unfortunately, the skills labs at nursing colleges in Ethiopia are often under-resourced, so it has typically become the responsibility of hospitals that accept nursing graduates as staff to train and mentor them in hands-on clinical skills before they practice on patients.

AIHA and the DBCSH team recognized that equipping a new skills lab and simulation center would be a critical component of improving the knowledge and skills of the nurses and midwives at the hospital and worked to renovate it accordingly.

DBCSH Nurse Matron Mr. Tsigishet Negash explained that the newly renovated Skills Lab serves in excess of 400 clinical staff, more than half of whom are nurses and midwives. “Our nursing and midwifery staff serve day and night caring for patients, so the Skills Lab is critical for developing psychomotor skills, which brings their education to life and improves both clinical practice and patient safety,” he said.



*Mr. Tsigishet Negash (right) provides an overview of the newly renovated DBCSH Skills Lab and Simulation Center.*

“Our Skills Lab plays a crucial role in improving clinical competency and patient safety by offering continued support for acquiring and upgrading hands-on knowledge and skills,” he concluded, noting that the Lab is a hub for ongoing and continuous learning that enhances healthcare service delivery, staff performance, and research and innovation at DBCSH.

### **Building On a Long History of Collaboration and Capacity Building**

AIHA first started working with DBCSH in 2007, establishing a partnership that linked the institution with Elmhurst Hospital Center in New York City through our PEPFAR-supported [HIV/AIDS Twinning Center Program](#). That seven-year [partnership](#) was led by Dr. Joseph Masci and Dr. Fisseha Tadesse, who was DBCSH’s Medical Director at the time.

“Dr. Masci served Debre Berhan Hospital with great dedication through his professional expertise as an Infectious Disease specialist. We learned so much through the twinning program in collaboration with Elmhurst Hospital Center, which led to many positive changes in our hospital’s practice,” Dr. Fisseha Tadesse recounted during the inauguration ceremony, stressing that today Dr. Masci’s legacy of service lives on through his family.

“His wife and son have continued his philanthropic spirit by showing love in action – giving generously from what they have, even without knowing us or our people personally. They were moved by the stories and experiences Dr. Masci shared with them and they chose to honor his memory by supporting the work he cared so deeply about. Their contribution is a powerful reminder of how one person’s compassion can inspire lasting impact,” he said.

DBCSH’s Medical Director and Chief Clinical Officer Dr. Nigussie Tefera also recalled the impact of the partnership, noting, “When I began working at this hospital, I noticed the vital role AIHA played in improving healthcare and acknowledged the significant contributions of individuals who were instrumental in the success of this initiative. The twinning partnership between Debre Berhan and Elmhurst was sincere and gap-focused, so it made a significant contribution to Debre Berhan’s ability to provide high-quality services, even playing a significant role in winning



*Dr. Fisseha Tadesse.*



*Dr. Nigussie Tefera.*

the last three consecutive Ethiopian Hospitals Alliance for Quality awards.”

Explaining that Dr. Masci and Dr. Fisseha exemplified perseverance and strength, and their contributions continue to resonate even today, Dr. Nigussie Tefera said, “Dr. Masci built strong trust with the Debre Berhan Hospital team involved in the twinning project. Now, the Masci family has placed their trust in us to carry on his legacy, which is both inspiring and a testament to the family’s strength and perseverance. This is a powerful example for all of us to learn from.”



*Mrs. Kidest Hailu.*

Echoing his sentiments, AIHA Country Director Kidest Hailu told those gathered, “We are deeply grateful to Dr. Masci for speaking about Ethiopia and Debre Berhan Comprehensive Specialized Hospital with his family. Can you imagine the words he must have shared – the stories, the passion, and the vision that inspired his family to continue supporting the hospital even after his passing? This shows what a kind, compassionate, and caring man Dr. Masci was, which has, in turn, influenced his family to continue to provide support and make a difference in the lives of the patients you serve!”

Dr. Masci’s wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Bass, traveled from New York to attend the ceremony. She told those gathered that she was deeply honored to be there and truly inspired by all the remarkable developments.



*Mrs. Elizabeth Bass.*

“I only knew about Debre Berhan from what my husband, Joe, shared with me. Joe was a natural problem solver – always driven to find solutions for the challenges he encountered. He was a mentor to many and held great respect for nurses, believing they are essential to delivering quality patient care within the health system,” Mrs. Bass said, stressing that Dr. Masci had profound admiration for both AIHA and Debre Berhan Comprehensive Specialized Hospital.

“This generous donation perfectly reflects the values he stood for, especially since he joined Elmhurst’s Global Health Department in 2017 with the intention to contribute meaningfully. Sadly, illness prevented him from fully realizing his aspirations,” she explained, concluding, “It’s great that you are using the funds well by training others at different hospitals and cascading the knowledge you gained.”



*Commemorating the official opening of the CPD Center and Nursing Skills Lab.*