Mission

The GEMMA Fund supports Emory University graduate students' research and their collaborations with public health organizations in order to contribute to the prevention of maternal deaths from abortion.

Background

According to the WHO, about 21 million women worldwide obtain unsafe abortions per year, and 13% of all maternal deaths are due to unsafe abortion. Nearly half of all abortions worldwide are considered unsafe by the WHO definition, and nearly all (98%) of unsafe abortions occur in developing countries. If all of the women who have abortions each year were to obtain abortions as safely as women in the United States and other developed countries, fewer than 100 women would die from abortion each year. *

The most recent WHO unsafe abortion incidence and mortality report concluded:

“The number of unsafe abortions is likely to continue to increase unless women's access to safe abortion and contraception—and support to empower women (including their freedom to decide whether and when to have a child)—are put in place and further strengthened.”

To encourage scholarship in this specific area in public health, Dr. Roger and Susan Rochat of the Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) established an endowed fund known as the Global Elimination of Maternal Mortality due to Abortion (GEMMA) Fund dedicated to the prevention of maternal deaths from abortion. By encouraging study of the surveillance of maternal deaths, the complications associated with abortion, and the monitoring and evaluation of appropriate interventions, the GEMMA Fund aims to help eliminate these deaths.

This year, RSPH is celebrating the tenth anniversary of the GEMMA Fund. Over the ten years of its existence and the four years student-driven GEMMA funded research, it has grown dramatically, propelled forward by the work of students, the support of donors, and the ceaseless leadership and guidance of Drs. Rochat, Lathrop, and others.

This report presents the highlights of GEMMA related activities from the 2011 to 2012 academic year.

Donor Support

During the past 12 months, more than 60 donors contributed to the endowed GEMMA Fund, helping the Fund reach 90% of its goal of reaching $200,000+ by the end of 2013. The Emory Reproductive Health Association (ERHA) and GEMMA student groups have contributed to fundraising for the GEMMA operations budget by offering “Health Dignity Justice—Choice” t-shirts on the Emory campus and at community events in exchange for donations.

GEMMA Donors:
From 1/1/2012 through 2/21/2013

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Donors per Giving Level

For more on financial progress and how to make a contribution, see page 12.
**At a Glance**

This report presents the highlights of GEMMA activities from the 2011 to 2012 academic year.

**Teaching**

**GEMMA Seminar (Spring 2012)**

In its third year, the GEMMA Seminar was again highly popular. Taught by Drs. Eva Lathrop, Andreea Creanga and Roger Rochat, the two-credit course covered the medical, legal, scientific, historic, and ethical aspects of abortion.

Guest speakers in the Spring 2012 course included: Dochyta Falcon, a Nicaraguan nurse, community organizer, and founder of Casa Materna; Fernanda Díaz de León, a lawyer working in Mexico City with the Group for Information on Reproductive Choice (Grupo de Información en Reproducción Elegida); Dr. Diane Morof, a physician who led class discussion on access to safe abortion services in Zimbabwe; and Dr. Tara Cleary, who presented on the history of abortion in the United States.

Following a successful Abortion Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) workshop for Emory faculty in October 2010, Dr. Rochat devoted a session of the 2012 seminar to VCAT using Ipas’ model toolkit.

The GEMMA Seminar is currently unique to Emory, but the faculty aims for it to be a model for other schools. In 2012, Drs. Lathrop and Rochat described the course in *Contraception*; the paper is titled “The GEMMA Seminar: a graduate public health course on Global Elimination of Maternal Mortality from Abortion” (for a full reference, please see page 10). Dr. Lathrop has also been able to present on the GEMMA seminar in various venues, including the Annual Fellowship in Family Planning meeting in 2012.

**Service**

**Impacting Policy: HB 954**

House Bill (HB) 954 was approved by the 2012 Georgia General Assembly. It prohibits all abortions after a fetus reaches 20 week gestation, except in the case of medical non-viability of the fetus. Under HB954, if doctors perform abortions after this time period, they can receive a prison sentence up to 10 years and lose their licenses. The bill was set to go into effect January 1, 2013; however, with the careful work of Dr. Lathrop and her colleagues with the ACLU, an injunction was issued on HB954 on December 24, 2012.

Recent work by the Georgia Maternal and Infant Health Research Group (GMIHRG), which consists of graduate students from the Emory University Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health, directly contributed to the addition of the medical non-viability amendment for HB954. In 2012, the group prepared district-specific information for legislators on their respective obstetric services, which led to the amendment of HB 954. GMIHRG’s main activities include investigating the current status of obstetric care in Georgia and exploring the reasons for and the consequences of provider shortage and maldistribution.

RSPH offers GEMMA relevant work experiences through the Rollins Earn and Learn (REAL) program at organizations like Planned Parenthood Southeast, Atlanta Feminist Women’s Health Center, the Georgia OB/GYN Society, and the Georgia State Health Department, among others.
Emory Reproductive Health Association and GEMMA Events

Partnering with the Emory Reproductive Health Association (ERHA), the GEMMA Co-Chairs helped organize numerous fund- and awareness-raising events throughout the 2011-2012 school year. Some highlights included:

- A display at RSPH celebrating the 39th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade
- Valentine’s Day candy fundraiser for GEMMA
- Collaborations with professionals from the Feminist Women’s Health Center in Atlanta
- Film screenings/discussions of When the Bough Breaks with students in the Sociocultural Determinants of Health certificate program
- Film-screening of Purity Myth and discussion with the Emory Graduate Christian Fellowship and the Atlanta Black Public Health Association
- GEMMA t-shirts at the Vagina Monologues performances and other events
- Sex and Pleasure educational evening
- Rollins’ annual Green and Pink Event, which raises money for obstetric fistula repair
- The “Choice Walk” demonstration at the Georgia Capitol
- GEMMA tables at RSPH events such as Visit Emory
- Sex Ed Trivia with the Law Students for Reproductive Justice and the Medical Students for Choice
- Lunch and Learn with professionals from Georgia Women for a Change
- Reproductive Health Practicum session for 1st year students
- Film screening and discussion of Freedom for Birth with Intown Midwifery and the Emory Nurse Midwifery Program

Annual Evening with GEMMA 2012

Students who have conducted research during the summer return to Emory in the fall, and present their findings at the Annual Evening with GEMMA event. Donors, students, and faculty attend this event to celebrate the work that Rollins GEMMA recipients do to combat the stigma, injury, and mortality associated with abortion and to find ways to improve the dignity, health and rights of women around the world. This past year’s Annual Evening with GEMMA was held in October 2012.

Consulting

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa chose Dr. Rochat as a consultant to assist in a multi-year CDC funded project to improve maternal and infant mortality surveillance. Dr. Rochat served on the national board of Physicians for Reproductive Health and Choice from 2009-2011.

Dr. Lathrop has the opportunity to regularly consult with serval NGOs working in reproductive health that have emphasis on family planning, safe abortion access, and post-abortion care. She has consulted with organizations such as Save the Children, American Refugee Committee, Population Services International’s Women’s Health Program, Konbit Sante, and the Women’s Refugee Commission, among others. Her work has taken her to Haiti, Pakistan, El Salvador, and Nepal.
International Student Practicum Research – GEMMA Awards

During the summer of 2012, the GEMMA Fund sponsored six public health students with awards of $500 each to commit their summers to GEMMA-related projects on three continents. After returning to Emory in the fall, they presented their projects at the Annual Evening with GEMMA event, which was attended by donors, students, and faculty. Through their work, these student recipients demonstrated their dedication to combating the stigma, injury, and mortality associated with abortion and to finding ways to improve the dignity, health and rights of women around the world.

The individual projects conducted by these GEMMA-supported students are described in the next several pages of this report.
Kavitha Balakumar, Kathmandu, Nepal
Although the Parliament of Nepal legalized abortion in 2002, maternal mortality due to unsafe abortion remains a major concern, particularly among adolescents. Currently, adolescents account for 19% of Nepal’s maternal deaths. An increase in post abortion complication cases at health posts suggests that they may not be receiving complete doses of medical abortion pills or accurate information about medical abortion. With support from Ipas Nepal, Kavitha conducted in-depth interviews with pharmacists to assess their knowledge of medical abortion, identify the contraceptive and medical abortion needs of adolescents, and the information pharmacists provide at the time of purchase. These interviews also allowed her to explore pathways of referrals from pharmacists to comprehensive abortion care (CAC) providers, along with pharmacists’ attitudes towards providing contraceptives to youth in the community. This information will be used to enhance Ipas youth-centric programming and education initiatives throughout the Kathmandu Valley.

Margaret Mary (Meg) Bertram, Kathmandu, Nepal
In 2002, Nepal’s parliament passed an amendment legalizing abortion. Formerly one of the few countries worldwide that jailed women for terminating pregnancies, abortions may now be performed during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, or up to 18 weeks in cases of rape, incest, fetal malformation, or when the woman’s life is endangered. The Government of Nepal’s Ministry of Health and Population has given high priority to strengthening family planning services, and is collaborating with Ipas Nepal to improve post-abortion family planning throughout the country, by providing contraceptive counselling for individual women’s needs and interests. Based on initial findings, Ipas and Meg conducted a quality of care assessment of the current family planning counseling, incorporating structured observations, in-depth interviews with clients, and discussions with providers.
Jeffrey D. Freeman, Cape Town, South Africa

Recently, South Africa legalized abortion through the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act (1996); preliminary investigation reported a 91% decline in hospital based abortion mortality. However, highly variable estimates of maternal and infant mortality suggest incomplete reporting of maternal and infant deaths. Jeffrey became involved in several projects to explore this issue and extended his summer work with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) through December 2012.

Jeffery worked on South Africa's National Health Insurance program, and conducted an assessment of the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems. He coordinated the first Maternal and Infant Morbidity and Mortality Surveillance (MIMMS) stakeholders meeting, drafted a proposal to conduct the 2013 MDG Country Assessment Reports, negotiated a memorandum of understanding between HSRC and the Council for Health Service Accreditation of South Africa (COHSASA) to conduct a nationwide audit of health facilities, and conducted a nationwide health audit and mapping the service infrastructure for civil registration and vital statistics. In the Fall of 2012, Jeffery provided training on probabilistic vital records linkage to Statistics South Africa.

Because of GEMMA support, the MIMMS project will include senior Marie Stopes South Africa staff and abortion services will be included in a nationwide health facilities audit. This will allow monitoring and evaluation of abortion services during the audit. The nation-wide health facility audit and mapping of the service infrastructure will describe the availability, utilization and quality of abortion services in South Africa. This will assist in measuring the impact of legalizing abortion services and how services should be improved.
Antoinette Nguyen, Rural Haitian Central Plateau, Haiti

Antoinette conducted a survey of knowledge, attitudes, and practice about family planning in the Central Plateau of Haiti. She worked on this project in collaboration with Sarah Rae Strunk and Sandra Zaeh, and under the mentorship of Eva Lathrop, MD. This research study was conducted in May 2012 and included women between the ages of 18 and 45. Of the women who came into the medical facility in the Central Plateau, about 200 participated in the study. The analysis of this survey is ongoing. She is also currently completing her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Northwestern in Chicago.

Amanda Geller, Cuernavaca, Mexico

Abortion is illegal in every state in Mexico, except Mexico City, with a few legal state exceptions. In the Federal District, abortion is legal only up to 12 weeks. Due to cultural and logistical factors, less than 6% of abortions are provided to adolescent girls, yet teen pregnancy rates remain high. To address this issue, organizations like Fondo Maria and Ddeser act as advocates and "friends" to girls seeking abortions. They help provide young women with transport, information, and faster access to services. Amanda’s primary project was aimed at evaluating teen pregnancy interventions through interviews with researchers, government, and non-governmental agencies. The interviews all included questions about access and provision of abortion to Mexican teens.

SOUTH AMERICA

Brianna Keefe-Oates, Asunción, Paraguay

Families Talking Together is an evidence-based intervention focused on improving parent-child communication about sexual and reproductive health with the goal of preventing adolescent pregnancies. This intervention was piloted in Paraguay to assess adolescents’ sexual health education and contraceptive needs, the acceptability of implementing a parent-focused pregnancy prevention intervention in the community, and possible future adaptations. Brianna conducted this research with the support of the Paraguayan National Institute of Health and in collaboration with Mil Solidarios, a youth development organization. Following the intervention, she conducted focus groups with the parents and interviews with adolescents to understand where they received information about sexual health topics and their perceptions of parent-child communication. She also interviewed key informants throughout Asunción to gather more insight into the contraceptive and sexual health needs of adolescents, including education and information about abortion. Using the information from the interviews and focus groups and the expertise of the key informants, Brianna made recommendations for implementing the program in Paraguay.
MPH Theses Related to GEMMA 2011-2012


Newton-Levinson, Anna. (2012). ‘People insult her as sexy woman’: Sexuality, stigma, and reproductive health among widowed and divorced women—documenting social change in Oromiya, Ethiopia. Master’s thesis. Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

Professional Presentations Related to GEMMA 2011-2012
* indicates Rollins student researchers

Psychosocial Workshop on Abortion
Chinthakanan, Oraweew* and Rochat, Roger. “Recent trends and patterns in US abortion-to-live birth ratios based on publicly available state websites”.

White, Darcy*, Claassen-Lüttner, Cayenne, and Stein, Sarah. “Promoting sexual and reproductive health through the development of a strategic campaign to improve the health and fortify the rights of women in Mexico”.

Newton-Levinson, Anna*.“‘People insult her as sexy woman’: Sexuality, stigma, and reproductive health among widowed and divorced women—documenting social change in Oromiya, Ethiopia”.

Global Maternal Health Conference
Barry, Danika*, L Sibley, M Dynes, S Tesfaye, K Ethier-Stover, A Hailmichael, E Medrassa, R Yirgu, M Molla, A Gebremariam.”Improving maternal and newborn health care in rural Ethiopia through the Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia Partnership (MaNHEP)”.

FIGO 2012: International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics Conference, Rome
Professional Publications Related to GEMMA 2011-2012
*indicates Rollins student researchers


GEMMA Recipients and GHI GEMMA Teams of the Past: Where are they now?

2011 GEMMA Recipients
Danika Barry, MPH works in Ethiopia for the Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia Partnership, which work to increase access to quality maternal and newborn health care in Ethiopia.

Anissa Dickerson, MPH

Beth Getachew, MPH works at the Zambia Rwanda HIV Research Group. She is the acting liaise between Emory, African sites, and the funding agencies.

Anna Newton-Levinson, MPH works as an ORISE Sexual Health Fellow with the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention at the CDC. She recently finished working with Dr. Rochat on developing an evaluation plan for family planning programs in the South.

2011 GEMMA Related GHI Team
Cayenne Claasesen, PhD recently earned her PhD in Religion/Religious Studies at Emory.

Lydia Karch, MPH is in her first year of the Peace Corps in Peru.

Sarah Stein, cJD/PhD, is earning her JD/PhD at Emory in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.

Darcy White, MPH is working with PRISM Health (Programs, Research, and Innovation in Sexual Minority Health) at RSPH.
GEMMA Recipients and GHI GEMMA Teams of the Past: Where are they now?

2010 GEMMA Recipients
Sarah Fisher, MPH works as the Manager of the Office of Program Accountability at the Albemarle County Department of Social Services in Charlottesville, VA. She is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of local Medicaid, child welfare, and adult protective services programs.

Brenna Rabel, MPH works in the Bureau of Women's and Children's Health at the Arizona Department of Health Services as their Injury Epidemiologist.

Shreya Rao, MPH is a 4th year medical student at the Emory University School of Medicine.

Danielle Smith, MPH works as an HIV Epidemiologist at the Michigan Department of Community Health. She will start medical school in Michigan this June, with the intent of becoming an OB/GYN.

Amy Winter, MPH is pursuing her PhD in Demography at Princeton.

Ryan Woodson, MPH is the Program Coordinator for the Healthy School Partnership at the Saban Free Clinic in Los Angeles.

2010 GEMMA Related GHI Team
Roula AbiSamra, MPH is the Project Coordinator for Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health’s Health Workforce Pilot Project at UCSF. The project is evaluating the safety, efficacy, and acceptability of training nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and physician assistants to provide first-trimester aspiration abortion.

Ruth Dawson, JD, MPH recently graduated from her JD/MPH program in December. She will begin work with the ACLU Southern California as a legal fellow, helping to develop the reproductive justice practice area at the affiliate.

Aimee Leidich, MPH is a Research Analyst with the UCSF Global Health Sciences Group. She provides technical support for the surveillance and M&E of HIV treatment and prevention programs in Tanzania, other African countries, and the Caribbean.

Maria Presley, MPH, MDiv works with International Relief and Development as a Program Officer in Stability and Governance Practice. Her work focuses on developing new business, designing technical solutions on proposals, and meeting with USAID, the World Bank, CSO, and other clients.

2009 GEMMA Recipients
Kellie Corcoran, MPH is a second year medical student at UC Davis. Kellie has continued to pursue activities in this field; in January 2012, she started a once monthly women’s clinic that serves sex workers and intravenous drug users. Kellie also served as the President and Treasurer of the UC Davis Chapter of Medical Students for Choice. Kellie hopes to become an OB/GYN and complete a fellowship in Family Planning.

Liz Corey, MPH is a third year medical student at the University of Wisconsin. She plans to become an OB/GYN and integrate public health with clinical medicine in order to increase access to family planning and safe abortions both in the United States and in developing countries.
Financial Progress

With generous donor contributions, the GEMMA Fund has continued to grow, making possible additional student scholarships for research, service, and advocacy projects. RSPH’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations has helped enormously in assisting with fundraising efforts. Notably, Dr. Rochat has committed to matching donations to GEMMA dollar for dollar up to $25,000 each year.

One Rollins alumna, Lauren Hill, MPH, weighs in on why supporting GEMMA is important to her:

“Reproductive and sexual health are so important to the human experience, and the effect of abortion on public health globally is so profound and under-researched. I wanted to learn more about it and contribute to the body of knowledge,” says Hill. While studying in the Hubert Department of Global Health, Hill was co-president of the Emory Reproductive Health Association. She worked closely with epidemiologist and professor Roger Rochat, who specializes in maternal and child health. ‘He was a fantastic mentor. The passion he has for the work he does is inspiring,’ Hill says.

Now director of training and special projects for a Planned Parenthood affiliate in the Los Angeles area, Hill supports the Global Elimination of Maternal Mortality from Abortion (GEMMA) Fund with her annual gifts.

‘Abortion is an extraordinarily taboo subject and it has severe health consequences globally. It is important to me to support research and work in this field,’ Hill says.”

To make a contribution to the GEMMA Fund, please contact:

Kathleen Presswala
Director of Annual Giving
Rollins School of Public Health
Office: (404) 712-8687
kathleen.presswala@emory.edu

Contributions can also be made online:
What Lies Ahead?

Dr. Rochat, Dr. Lathrop, and the GEMMA co-chairs continue to look for new GEMMA-related research opportunities worldwide. As more students conduct relevant research, the Fund will promote and support publication, travel to conferences, and other presentation opportunities. GEMMA aims to support up to eight students with GEMMA awards in the summer of 2013.

This past fall, Dr. Eva Lathrop wrote to the White House regarding the issue of unsafe abortion globally and in the United States. Below is President Obama’s response. GEMMA will strive to continue to expand awareness about the issue of maternal mortality from unsafe abortion.

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Dear Friend:

Thank you for sharing your views on abortion. This is a heart-wrenching issue, and I appreciate your perspective.

I am committed to protecting a woman’s right to choose while supporting policies and programs that help prevent unintended pregnancies, assist pregnant women and mothers, encourage healthy relationships, and promote adoption.

Part of my promise to make my Administration the most open and transparent in history is hearing from people like you. I take seriously your opinions and respect your point of view on this difficult issue. Please know that your concerns will be on my mind in the days ahead.

Thank you, again, for taking the time to write. I encourage you to visit www.WhiteHouse.gov to learn more about my Administration or to contact me in the future.

Sincerely,
Barack Obama

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