Mission

The GEMMA Fund supports Emory University public health graduate students’ research and their collaborations with public health organizations, including the publishing and publicity of student research findings in order to contribute to the prevention of maternal deaths from abortion.

Background

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), in 2008 about 21.6 million women obtained unsafe abortions and 47,000 women died from abortion-related complications. If the 55 million women who have abortions each year worldwide were to obtain abortions as safely as women in the United States, fewer than 100 women world-wide would die as a result of the abortion. Moreover, WHO reports that unsafe abortions are virtually absent and overall abortion rates are lower in countries with less-restrictive abortion laws.*

In response to reports of continuing high maternal mortality from abortion in many other countries, sometimes even neglected in safe motherhood strategies, the GEMMA Fund believes that improved surveillance of maternal deaths and complications associated with abortion and monitoring and evaluation of appropriate interventions will help to eliminate these deaths.

To encourage scholarship toward this specific public health goal, Dr. Roger and Susan Rochat of the Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH) have 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.

Donor Support

During last 12 months nearly 24 donors have contributed over $22,000 to the endowed GEMMA Fund. In addition, ERHA/GEMMA have raised nearly $500 for the GEMMA operations budget by selling Health Dignity Justice—Choice t-shirts on the Emory campus and at community events.

GEMMA Donors 2010-2011:

Kara Brown-Robinson  
Dr. Ward Cates  
Pat Cota*  
Dr. Jim Curran  
Ruth Dawson  
Sarah Fisher  
Dr. Stan Foster  
Dr. Gene & Rose Gangarosa  
Dr. M.V. George  
Dr. Lisa Haddad  
Lauren Hill  
Dr. James M and Pamela Hughes

Dr. Keith & Magderie Klugman  
Dr. Eva Lathrop  
Aimee Leidich  
Dr. Linda and Ronald McCauley  
Sasha Mital  
Carol Lynn Moore  
Trisha Moslin  
Juli Gribus and Matthew J Powers  
Dr. Roger & Susan Rochat  
Dr. Susan Temporado and David Cookson  
Dr. Carl Tyler, Jr.  
Dr. Nicholas Vogenthaler

* Pat Cota is Executive Director, Georgia Obstetrics and Gynecology Society. Gift was honorarium for Dr. Rochat’s faculty mentoring of MPH students in Georgia Maternal and Infant Health Research Group on obstetric shortages, rural GA.

GEMMA Donors 2010-2011

Less than $100 30%  
$100-$999 35%  
$1000-$9,999 31%  
$10,000+ 4%

For more on financial progress and how to make a contribution, see page 10.
In the three years since the first students received GEMMA funding, it has grown dramatically, driven by the work of students, the support of donors, and the ceaseless leadership and guidance of Dr. Rochat and his wife, Susan. This report presents the highlights of GEMMA activities from the 2010 to 2011 academic year.

Teaching

**GEMMA Seminar (Spring 2011)**

In its second year, the GEMMA Seminar was again met with overwhelming popularity. Taught by Drs. Eva Lathrop, Andreea Creanga and Roger Rochat, the expanded two-credit course covered the medical, legal, scientific, historic, and ethical aspects of abortion. Guest speakers included researchers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Mexico’s National Pro-Choice Alliance, and UNC School of Medicine, among others. The GEMMA Seminar is unique to Emory, and the faculty is developing a manuscript for publication that describes the course as a possible model for other schools.

**Abortion Values Clarification Workshop (Spring 2011)**

After the successful Abortion Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) workshop conducted in October 2010 (see last year’s annual report), Dr. Rochat devoted a session of the 2011 GEMMA seminar to VCAT exercises, using Ipas’ model toolkit. Responding to the popularity of the session, Dr. Rochat arranged an additional 3-hour Saturday VCAT session for the Emory community, led by two students from the seminar. Additionally, one participant from the 2010 workshop became a committed ongoing contributor to the GEMMA Fund and another led a VCAT workshop in a high school in London.

Service

**Impacting Policy**

Dual degree law and MPH student Ruth Dawson (2012) and Rollins alumni Roula AbiSamra (2011), Janelle Hartman (2011), and Aimee Leidich (2011) contributed to the authorship and defense of two new American Public Health Association (APHA) policy statements on abortion services. The first of the two statements, *Regulating Disclosure of Services and Sponsorship of Crisis Pregnancy Centers*, advocates for the enforcement of laws that require full disclosure on the part of Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPCs) as to what services they do and do not provide, what prescriptions and referrals they are willing to make, and their sources of financial support. The second, *Ensuring Minors’ Access to Confidential Abortion Services*, advocates for policies that do not require parental notification or involvement for adolescents to receive abortion services, but encourage them to involve adults in their decision-making process. (http://www.apha.org/advocacy/policy/2011approvedpolicies.htm)

**Emory Reproductive Health Association and GEMMA Events**

Partnering with the Emory Reproductive Health Association (ERHA), the GEMMA Co-Chairs organized four fund- and awareness-raising events throughout the year. First, the leaders of both organizations collaborated to create a display at the School of Public Health celebrating the 38th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade, and encouraged students and faculty to share what Roe means to them (January 2011). Second, for Valentine’s Day, GEMMA and ERHA sold candy and all proceeds went to the GEMMA Fund (February 2011).
Third, the groups collaborated with other student organizations to coordinate the annual Green and Pink Event, which highlights the connection between reproductive and environmental health and raises money for obstetric fistula repair (April 2011). Perhaps most importantly, ERHA recruited volunteers to partner with Planned Parenthood in a phone drive to oppose the Personhood Initiative in Mississippi, a bill defining personhood as beginning at fertilization, which would threaten women’s access to basic reproductive health services (October 2011).

Consulting
The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa has chosen 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 national board of Physicians for Reproductive Health and Choice 2009-2011.

Research

Presentations
Four public health students presented findings from their GEMMA-funded summer research projects at the 39th Annual Psychosocial Workshop on Abortion in March 2011. The Fund provided $200 for travel expenses to each of the four attendees. These presentations were well received and prompted faculty at UC Berkeley to contact Dr. Rochat about possible collaborations in graduate student education and practicum mentorship.

Domestic Research Projects
Several current MPH students are writing theses on abortion issues in the United States. One student, an obstetrician from Thailand, is examining web-based state data on abortion as an alternative to the two other sources of data currently used: CDC reports on state-submitted data and Guttmacher Institute publications based on surveys of abortion providers. A second student is describing the changes in demographic trends and patterns among women who obtained abortions in Georgia between 1994 and 2007.

International Student Practicum Research - GEMMA AWARDS
A primary objective of the GEMMA Fund is to support student research on the causes, consequences, and solutions to maternal mortality, particularly as it relates to abortion. During the summer of 2011, the GEMMA Fund sponsored five public health students with awards of $500 each and provided support and advising for a multidisciplinary team of four students. These nine student researchers committed their summers to GEMMA-related projects on four continents. After returning to Emory in the fall, they presented their findings at a symposium 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 below.
Sarah Fisher worked with SEARCH (Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health), an Indian NGO, to research pregnancy-associated deaths in rural Gadchiroli, Maharashtra, India. Sarah analyzed data on 319 deaths among women in 86 villages between the years 1988 to 2004. She assessed the distribution of direct and indirect maternal deaths, as well as of suicide and accidental deaths among the study population. She specifically looked at the distribution of deaths overall and by the pregnancy stage during which the death occurred. Staff at SEARCH plan to use the study results to better target future interventions for pregnant women. After graduating in May 2012, Sarah is hoping to continue conducting reproductive health-related research with a non-profit organization.
**Beth Getachew** worked with CARE International to assess the cultural appropriateness of the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) scale and the Sexual Relationship Power Scale (SRPS) related to gender and power norms in the East and West Hararghe regions of Ethiopia. These scales were used to collect data as part of the Results Initiative Baseline Data (RIBD), a joint project between CARE and Emory University, but they have not been validated for use in Ethiopia. To this end, Beth conducted individual in-depth interviews based on the scales used in the RIBD survey for cognitive validation and to understand how social factors such as gender equity and power norms influence the decision-making process towards family planning use. With such an understanding, CARE Ethiopia will be able to formulate and implement an effective intervention program that will improve family planning service uptake in the region. Beth will graduate with her MPH in 2012 and plans to pursue a career advancing gender equity in health, specifically addressing issues of poor maternal health.

**Anna Newton-Levinson** worked with CARE in Ethiopia conducting a qualitative study of the reproductive health needs of widowed and divorced women. Part of her research looked at the consequences of unintended or undesired pregnancy for widowed or divorced women as well as the changes in access to family planning and abortion services in Ethiopia. Anna will use the results of her research for a qualitative thesis, “Documenting social change and family planning use among widowed and divorced women in Hararghe Ethiopia.” She will complete her MPH in Spring 2012 and hopes to continue to work in reproductive health after graduation.

**Danika Barry** worked with the Maternal and Newborn Health in Ethiopia Partnership (MaNHEP), a collaboration between Emory University’s Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing and the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Health, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. She conducted focus groups and in-depth interviews with members of community quality improvement teams, which are comprised of various cadres of community-level health workers, pregnant women and family members, community government representatives, women’s association members, and religious leaders. Her research aimed to understand strategies for pregnancy disclosure, care seeking, and the provision of timely, quality care. The results of this research will be combined with ongoing data analysis on service delivery and quality of care outcomes for her master’s thesis. Danika has continued to work as a Research Assistant with MaNHEP, and she will complete her MPH degree in May 2012.
**SOUTH AMERICA**

**Anissa Dickerson** conducted a preliminary investigation of current abortion issues in Paraguay, where abortion is highly restricted and only permitted in cases where a woman’s life is in danger. As a result, abortion is one of the major contributors to maternal mortality in the country. Anissa conducted key informant interviews and gathered background information to support future research. She is currently in the process of recruiting additional students to conduct further research on abortion in Paraguay. Anissa will be graduating with her MSN/MPH in May and plans to work as a midwife after graduation.

**NORTH AMERICA**

Rollins MPH students Darcy White and Lydia Karch, along with Religious Studies student Cayenne Claassen-Lüttner and dual degree Law and Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies student Sarah Stein spent the summer working with Mexico’s National Pro-Choice Alliance. Building upon the work of a GEMMA-affiliated student group that worked in Mexico in the summer of 2010, this multidisciplinary team received funding from the Emory Global Health Institute (GHI) to design and pilot advocacy messages aimed at de-stigmatizing and increasing access to safe abortion. The team developed two sets of messages specific to the legal, cultural, and religious contexts of Mexico City and Oaxaca de Juárez, and over the course of the summer conducted 27 interviews with health professionals and 6 focus group discussions with community members. The primary deliverable was a series of refined advocacy messages that the team presented to the National Pro-Choice Alliance upon completion of the project. The Alliance plans to incorporate the message proposals into future campaigns.

After returning to Atlanta, the team presented their research at the GHI research symposium, and in October Darcy White traveled back to Mexico City on behalf of the team to present the findings at the IV Research Meeting on Undesired Pregnancy and Unsafe Abortion. Darcy and Lydia expect to complete their MPH degrees in May of 2012, after which Lydia will enter the Peace Corps and Darcy will seek to continue working in international sexual and reproductive health. Sarah expects to graduate with her JD in 2013 and her PhD in 2015 or 2016. She remains committed to investigating and advocating for reproductive justice in her academic, professional and personal activities. Cayenne plans to defend her PhD dissertation in the Spring of 2012, and for her next academic project she hopes to return to Mexico to study how religion influences women’s healthcare decisions.
MPH Theses Related to GEMMA 2010-2011

“Unwanted Pregnancy and Induced Abortion among Women of Reproductive Age in the Amazon Region of Colombia” By Ryan Woodson

“Patients’ experiences of first-trimester abortion in public facilities in Mexico City: Three years after decriminalization” By Roula AbiSamra

“Trends of Induced Abortions in the state of Georgia – A comparison of Four Race/Ethnic Groups: White, Black, Asian & Hispanic, 1994-2007” By Linn Bergander

"Perceptions of unwanted pregnancy, emergency contraception and abortion: a qualitative study of healthcare providers and community leaders in the Amazon region of Colombia" By Shreya Rao

Professional Presentations Related to GEMMA 2010-2011

Psychosocial Workshop on Abortion

“Unwanted Pregnancy and Induced Abortion among Women of Reproductive Age in the Amazon Region of Colombia” By Ryan Woodson

“Patients’ experiences of first-trimester abortion in public facilities in Mexico City: Three years after decriminalization” By Roula AbiSamra

National Abortion Federation Conference, Chicago

“The reality of race and abortion in Georgia: Racial, age and geographic patterns and trends from 1994-2007” By Linn Bergander & Aimee Leidich

American Public Health Association 138th Annual Meeting

"Responding to the conservative backlash to women's sexual and reproductive rights, including abortion, throughout Mexico at the state level through strategic and collaborative research and advocacy“ By Roula AbiSamra, Aimee Leidich, Ruth Dawson, and Maria Presley

Professional Publications Related to GEMMA 2010-2011

1. **Linn Bergander**: “Trends of Induced Abortions in the State of Georgia – A Comparison of Four Race/Ethnic Groups: White, Black, Asian & Hispanic, 1994-2007.” She will be submitting her thesis to Contraception at the end of April. Linn’s thesis was one of 14 Global Health theses to be nominated for the Shepherd Award honoring the top MPH thesis composition.

2. **Aimee Leidich**: “Determinants of sexual and reproductive rights language: Catholic men’s opinions about fertility control in Mexico.” She will be submitting her thesis for publication to Culture, Health & Sexuality. Aimee’s was also one of 14 Global Health thesis projects to be nominated for the Shepherd Award.

3. **Roula Abisamra & Aimee Leidich**: "Abortion: Yesterday and Today," an article which overviews the history of abortion methods, spanning as far back as 3000 BC. The article was published in the February 2011 edition of In Scripto, a publication of the Science Writers Association of Emory (SWAE).

4. **Brenna Rabel**: “Interview interruption and questions about domestic violence in India” which is under review at the journal Violence Against Women.
GEMMA Fund Sponsored Students of the Past: Where are they now?

2009 GEMMA Fund Recipients

Kellie Corcoran conducted a GEMMA-sponsored needs-assessment of post-partum IUD insertion for pregnant women tested for HIV in Lusaka, Zambia with the Rwanda Zambia HIV Research Group (RZHRG). Kellie is now a first year medical student at UC Davis and she continues her reproductive health advocacy as the president and treasurer of the UC Davis Chapter of Med Students for Choice.

Elizabeth (Liz) Corey spent the summer of 2009 working with the Chikankata Child Survival Project in Zambia, where she researched the availability of and attitudes towards family planning and Post-Abortion Care. She is now a second year medical student.

2010 GEMMA Fund Recipients

Danielle Smith received GEMMA funding for research on the impact of perceived gender and power norms on family planning decision-making in Siaya, Kenya. She is now working for the Michigan State Health Department.

Ryan Woodson conducted a qualitative research study on the socio-cultural perceptions and decision-making pathways of unwanted pregnancy and induced abortion among indigenous women in the Amazon region of Colombia. Ryan is currently Program Coordinator of the Healthy School Partnership at The Saban Free Clinic in Los Angeles, California. She is preparing to start medical school in the fall of 2012.

Shreya Rao received GEMMA funding in 2010 to conduct a qualitative study to identify the causes and consequences of unwanted pregnancy in Leticia, Colombia. Shreya is currently in her first year of medical school at Emory. She is a student advisory committee member of the Global Health institute (GHI) and a member of Emory Health Against Human Trafficking with whom she will be traveling to Thailand this summer to provide healthcare to victims.

Amy Winter worked with the women’s program team at SEARCH (Society for Education, Action, Research, and Community Health) to improve the women’s health education curriculum in the summer of 2010. While in India, she also researched rural and tribal women’s perceptions of sterilization and the factors associated with female rather than male sterilization within a couple. After graduating from Rollins, Amy went to Princeton to pursue a PhD in Demography.

Brenna Rabel worked with SEARCH to analyze data from a clinic-based study on local women choosing medical abortion. She is currently working in a non-public health capacity but her ultimate goal is to get back into reproductive health work.

2010 GEMMA-Affiliated Researchers

Roula AbiSamra, Aimee Leidich, Ruth Dawson, and Maria Presley spent the summer of 2010 in Mexico working on a multidisciplinary project funded by the Global Health Institute. Partnering with Mexico’s National Pro-Choice Alliance, the team compiled evidence-based recommendations for messaging to combat the stigma and isolation faced by women who have had or may need an abortion in Mexico. This GEMMA Project received the Outstanding Practicum Experience Award for 2011 which is awarded annually to 12 Public Health students at Emory whose work best demonstrates Public Health in action.
Roula is now a Project Coordinator with the Advancing New Standards in Reproductive Health (ANSIRH) research group of the Bixby Center for Global Reproductive Health, University of California in San Francisco (UCSF). She supports ANSIRH’s Health Workforce Pilot Project, which is evaluating the safety, efficacy, and acceptability of training nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, and physician assistants to provide first-trimester aspiration abortion.

Aimee is working as an analyst for the UCSF Global Health Science Prevention and Public Health group.

Maria graduated from the Candler School of Theology and now works in the Associate Program Office in Community Stabilization for International Relief and Development.

Ruth is finishing up her studies at Emory and expects to graduate in December of 2012 with a joint JD and MPH degree. Over the summer she will be the first summer clerk with the Reproductive Justice Policy Project of the American Civil Liberties Union Northern California. She plans to apply to fellowships in reproductive justice after taking the bar exam.

Financial Progress

With generous contributions from donors and the Rochats, the GEMMA Fund has continued to grow, making possible new research, service, and advocacy projects. Carol Moore and other members of the Development Team have contributed enormously in assisting Dr. Rochat with fundraising efforts. Notably, Dr. Rochat has committed to matching donations to GEMMA dollar for dollar up to $25,000 each year for the next two years. In addition to donations, students from the Emory Reproductive Health Association and the GEMMA Fund Co-Chairs raised over $200 by selling Valentine’s Day chocolates and hundreds of dollars through the sale of the popular Health, Dignity, Justice—Choice t-shirts. Having made shirts available for online purchase, GEMMA leaders have expanded their sales, shipping shirts across the country as far as Louisiana and California.

For t-shirt ordering information please visit:
http://www.sph.emory.edu/cms/academic_programs/research/gemma_t-shirts.html

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

Kathleen Presswala, JD, Director of Annual Giving
Rollins School of Public Health
Emory University, Development and Alumni Relations
1518 Clifton Road, Room 8051
MS 1518-002-8BA
Atlanta, GA 30322
Office: (404) 712-8687; Fax: (404) 712-8879
Kathleen.presswala@emory.edu

Contributions can also be made online:
Https://secure.ww.alumniconnections.com/olc/pub/EMR/onlinegiving/showGivingForm.jsp?form_id=1374
What Lies Ahead

Dr. Rochat and the GEMMA Co-Chairs will 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. Additionally, given the success of the past VCAT workshops, GEMMA will continue to support the planning of such events throughout Atlanta and communities across the country.

Other potential projects and expansions include:

- Presenting the GEMMA seminar course in professional meetings and publications
- Supporting opportunities to teach the GEMMA seminar course in new settings, including a one week short course or a distance learning course
- Seeking collaboration for student practicum opportunities with the 25+ organizations committed to GEMMA goals, including The Population Council, Ipas, Pathfinder International, World Health Organization, and the Pan American Health Organization.
- Seeking funding support from private foundations to expand GEMMA work to include:
  1. expanding the number of public health and other students able to engage in GEMMA supported practicums.
  2. extending the GEMMA seminar to new audiences and facilitating Values Clarification Workshops.
In 1986, Dr. Rochat ended a meeting of ministers of health from around the world at Emory to provide technical support for those ministers focusing on maternal and child health. During one of their sessions, President Carter stopped by and called on the group “to solve the problem of abortion.”

Twenty-four years later, in October of 2010, Dr. Rochat invited President Carter to Emory for a Values Clarification Workshop on Abortion, supported by the Institute for Developing Nations. Although he was unable to attend, President Carter in turn invited Dr. Rochat to join him for one of his periodic lunches with Emory faculty. Recalling the President’s interest in addressing abortion-related morbidity and mortality, Dr Rochat gave him one of the shirts used to raise funds for the GEMMA Fund. In thanks, President Carter graciously sent the following letter to Dr. Rochat and his wife, Susan, to recognize them for their hard work and dedication.

GEMMA aims to disperse another five GEMMA awards for summer 2011 as well as support a second GHI GEMMA Team at the National Pro-Choice Alliance in Mexico City. Efforts are underway to expand awareness about the GEMMA Fund and the issue of maternal mortality from unsafe abortion in the greater Atlanta Community.