The GEMMA Fund
Fourth Annual Report: 2012-2013
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 eleventh anniversary of the GEMMA Fund. Over the eleven years of its existence and the five years of 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 Dr. Rochat, Dr. Lathrop, and others.

This report presents the highlights of GEMMA related activities from the 2012 -2013 academic year.

Donor Support

During 2012-2013, approximately 100 donors contributed to the endowed GEMMA Fund. The Emory Reproductive Health Association (ERHA) and GEMMA student groups 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:**

1/1/2012 - 12/31/2013

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At a Glance

This report presents the highlights of GEMMA activities from the 2012 to 2013 academic year.

Teaching

GEMMA Seminar (Spring 2013)
In its fourth year, the GEMMA Seminar was again met with overwhelming popularity. 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. The course brought in a range of speakers from diverse backgrounds and included an Abortion Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) workshop using Ipas’s model toolkit.

Although the GEMMA Seminar is unique to Emory, the faculty aims for the course to be a model for other schools. In 2014, UCSF’s School of Nursing plans to start a GEMMA course. Additionally, Dr. Rochat is exploring the possibility of developing GEMMA into an online course in order to reach a wider audience.

Service

Impacting Policy
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 of 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 at the ACLU, an injunction was issued on December 24, 2012. The bill remains suspended until a final determination is made by the State Court.

The Georgia Maternal and Infant Health Research Group (GMIHRG), which consists of graduate students from Emory University’s Schools of Medicine, Nursing, and Public Health, directly contributed to the addition of the medical non-viability amendment for HB954. 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. In 2013, public health and medical students working with GMIHRG distributed surveys to Georgia OB/GYN residents and certified nurse midwifery students to identify characteristics of obstetric provider trainees that are associated with the desire to practice in rural Georgia. A significant barrier to practicing in Georgia is the political climate; a large percentage of residents (33.8%) and nurse midwifery students (32.1%) indicated that they were less likely to stay in Georgia due to abortion restrictions (HB954). Other findings from this survey suggested that expanding certified nurse midwifery training programs, implementing financial incentive programs, and recruiting residents with Georgia ties may increase the number of obstetric providers in rural Georgia. These conclusions highlight potential next steps for Georgia’s advocates, legislators, hospital programs, health sciences universities, and public health organizations to alleviate the shortage of obstetric providers in the state.

Community Collaborations
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
In partnership with the Emory Reproductive Health Association (ERHA), the GEMMA Co-Chairs helped organize numerous fund- and awareness-raising events throughout the 2012-2013 school year. Some highlights included:

- A display at RSPH celebrating the 40th Anniversary of Roe v. Wade
- Sex and pleasure educational evening
- Collaborations with professionals from the Feminist Women’s Health Center in Atlanta
- Bagel breakfast in conjunction with Global Health Wednesdays seminars
- GEMMA table at career fairs and Visit Emory
- GEMMA t-shirts at Vagina Monologues performances and other RSPH events
- Presentation by Tracy Weitz of UCSF’s Bixby Center on late term abortion
- Sex trivia night with HOLA, Law Students for Reproductive Justice, and Medical Students for Choice
- SPOOOOOK out the stigma event at Tin Lizzy’s to reduce stigma surrounding abortion
- FC2 female condom training evening
- Reproductive Health Practicum session for 1st year students
- Presentation by Dr. Eva Lathrop on abortion access in restrictive political climates

Annual Evening with GEMMA 2013
GEMMA recipients who conducted research over 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 2013 and included presentations from the 2013 GEMMA recipients, as well as presentations from medical students doing GEMMA related work.
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. He also consults for Planned Parenthood on several ongoing projects. In the fall of 2013, Dr. Rochat arranged a collaboration between the Georgia Department of Public Health and the students in his Reproductive Health Program Management (GH 539) course. He oversaw the students as they completed a Title X Family Planning Needs Assessment for the state of Georgia.

Dr. Lathrop has the opportunity to regularly consult with several NGOs working in reproductive health that focus 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.

Research

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. Since GEMMA’s founding, 32 students have received grants to conduct research on these issues. During the summer of 2013, the GEMMA Fund sponsored six public health students with awards of $500 each to commit their summers to GEMMA-related projects. Through their work, these students 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 the annual report.

Andrea Catalano, Comayagua, Honduras

With the help of GFE and GEMMA funding, Andrea was able to design and conduct a research study looking at unintended pregnancy and abortion in Comayagua, Honduras over the summer of 2013. She trained and oversaw 2 research assistants who were able to collect 209 surveys from ever-pregnant women ages 18-24 present in 4 local health clinics. Other components of the project included in-depth interviews with OB/GYNs and a mixed methods survey for pharmacy workers. The preliminary findings showed a general lack of knowledge and firm attitudes towards abortion. Many participants answered 'maybe' when asked if abortion should be an option in a variety of situations and the majority of pharmacy workers believed that Plan B can cause an abortion. She is currently using the data for her Master’s thesis and will also be presenting her research at the Unite for Sight Global Health and Innovation Conference in April.
Danielle Miranda, Cody Sigel, Jose Guillen, Helen Baker; Cape Town, South Africa

Between June and August of 2013 an Emory University GHI team conducted a mixed methods study in Cape Town, South Africa that explored the demand for, and feasibility of, incorporating custom-fitted male condoms into current sexual health interventions. In association with the Human Sciences Research Council and other community-based and government agencies in Cape Town, the project included 22 in-depth qualitative interviews with sex workers to examine interest in custom-fitted condoms; surveys of 130 men to explore condom use experiences, attitudes, and interest in non-standard sized condoms; and interviews with condom distribution and education staff at clinics and sexual health organizations to determine the feasibility of incorporating custom-fitted condoms to existing interventions and practices. Results from this study will lay the groundwork for future research surrounding the topic of custom-fitted male condoms as a sexual health intervention.
Jaynia Anderson; Cape Town, South Africa

Jaynia's summer practicum involved working with the Human Sciences Research Council’s Population Health, Health Systems and Innovation section. Her project was GEMMA focused and involved designing and conducting a qualitative study aimed to explore and identify the personal, cultural, social, and structural barriers experienced by women accessing abortion services. This was done through in-depth interviews focused on 4 main delays: delay in recognizing pregnancy, delay in making a decision, delay in accessing a healthcare facility, and delay in accessing adequate medical care. 15 women were interviewed post-abortion procedure at 2 private reproductive health facilities in the Western Cape Province in South Africa. The results from the study are currently being analyzed and will be presented at the Annual Psychosocial Workshop held in Boston, MA at the end of May, as well as at the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population's International Seminar on Decision-Making Regarding Abortion to be held in Nanyuki, Kenya in June.
MPH Theses Related to GEMMA 2012-2013

Bertram, Margaret Mary. (2013). Structured observations of pre-abortion contraceptive counseling within the comprehensive abortion care unit of Maternity and Women’s Hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal.


Professional Presentations Related to GEMMA 2012-2013
GHI Scholars Symposium, November 14, 2013, Atlanta, GA.
Baker, Helen; Guillen, José; Miranda, Danielle; Sigel, Cody. One Choice of Condom is no Choice at all: Exploring Custom-Fitted Condoms as a Sexual Health Intervention in Cape Town, South Africa

PAA Psychosocial Workshop April 10, 2013, New Orleans, LA.
Rochat, Roger. Prospects for dissemination of the GEMMA model and materials.

GEMMA recipients of the past: Where are they now?

Maria Presley began a new position at Family Health International 360 (FHI 360) as a Technical Officer in the Civil Society and Peacebuilding Department. She is based in Washington, DC, but spends significant time traveling across East and West Africa and Asia doing business development for FHI 360.

Lydia Karch is a Field Organizer for WV FREE, West Virginia’s leading reproductive rights, health, and justice non-profit. She is currently organizing around two major state legislative initiatives: the Pregnant Workers’ Fairness Act (PWFA) and the I Stand with WV Women campaign (standing against insurance bans or regulations related to abortion). In addition, Lydia works on the national All* Above All campaign, which has the end of repealing the Hyde Amendment and ensuring that abortion care is available to all who need it, regardless of age, race, or income.

Danielle Finch (Smith) is in her first year of medical school at Michigan State University College of Osteopathic Medicine. She got married in May and changed her last name to Finch.

Liz Corey is in her fourth year of medical school at the University of Wisconsin where she is going into OB/GYN. Beginning February 2014, she will be in Nepal for a two month rotation working with a local OB/GYN at a hospital and rural outreach clinics, and working on a public health project that aims to improve family planning counseling.

Amy Winter married her partner of nine years, Cathy Marion, in New York City in May, 2013.

Ruth Dawson works for the ACLU of Southern California as a legal fellow and attorney. Her work includes legal and policy advocacy in reproductive justice, gender equity, and LGBTQ issues. In her professional life, she has led a couple of Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) workshops, which she learned in the GEMMA seminar. Ruth is also on the board of Planned Parenthood Young Professionals in LA, and is a guest blogger for Law Students for Reproductive Justice.
What lies ahead?

With generous contributions from donors and the Rochats, the GEMMA Fund has continued to grow, making possible new research, service, and advocacy projects. Dr. Rochat, Dr. Lathrop, and the GEMMA co-chairs continue to look for new GEMMA-related research opportunities worldwide, and to support students by providing funding for research, publications, and travel to conferences. The GEMMA fund also continues to explore new ways to broaden GEMMA course's reach, both within the Emory community and across the globe. Emory’s Office of Development and Alumni Relations has contributed enormously in assisting Dr. Rochat with fundraising efforts.

This holiday season, Dr. Rochat’s grandchildren donated to the GEMMA fund starting a new generation of supporters of this important work.

To make a contribution to the GEMMA Fund:

1) Donate online: http://www.sph.emory.edu/academic_programs/research/gemma_contact.html

2) Mail a check made out to Emory University (with GEMMA Fund on the subject line):
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