

## The Brazil Community Health Fellowship Final Report, 2014

### Overview

The Brazil Community Health Fellowship (BCHF) is a collaboration between Brown University's Brazil Initiative, the Brown University School of Public Health, and Instituto de Saúde Coletiva, Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA), the premier public health program in Northeastern Brazil. Dr. Amy Nunn and Dr. Ines Dourado are PIs of this program; Dr. Amy Nunn is Executive Director of the Rhode Island Public Health Institute at Brown University, and Dr. Ines Dourado, Professor at the Instituto de Saúde Coletiva, UFBA. The first year of our program included: a) training in community-based scholarship prior to field work in Brazil; b) a two-month community research experience in Bahia, Brazil; and c) mentorship throughout the program's duration from expert mentors. The main objective of this program is to engage Brown University undergraduate and medical students in experiential learning about community-engaged work related to HIV/AIDS and reproductive health in Brazil, with a focus on community service and reducing health disparities. This program formalized research and training collaborations between the Brown University School of Public Health and the Universidad Federal da Bahia, and facilitated a scholarly exchange program for Brazilian students to train with Brown faculty. This fellowship supports President Paxton's 10 year strategic plan for Brown University students and faculty, and is grounded in both the mission and vision of the Brazil Initiative and the Brown University School of Public Health.

### Student Fellowship

#### *Research and Training*

With the support of the Brazil Initiative award, six Brown University undergraduates and medical students trained in Salvador, Brazil for eight weeks during Summer 2014. All students underwent a highly competitive application process, attended a mandatory pre-departure orientation, and were conversant or fluent in Portuguese language. Once arriving in Salvador, Brazil, students took part in an eight-week intensive course and internship, while developing a research project based on quantitative or qualitative secondary data in their specific area of interest. Students received intensive training in epidemiology and in quantitative and qualitative methods during their time in Brazil, and received mentorship from UFBA faculty, doctoral students and BCHF staff throughout the course of their projects.



Students' research areas included efficacy of contraceptive use among HIV positive women, sexual behavior and drug use among HIV positive people, socio-emotional impact of HIV status on sexual minority men, and barriers to care among HIV positive men. Students developed a literature review, a concept note, descriptive data analysis and tables, an abstract and a poster. Many fellows are also submitting their findings for publication in reputable scientific journals along with co-authors from both UFBA and Brown University, and many are using their preliminary analysis to develop a thesis project. Examples of current

and pending peer reviewed abstracts and manuscripts are shown in Table 1. Students presented their finalized projects to faculty, staff and peers in October, 2014 at Brown University School of Public Health.

### *Field Experience*

The students' extensive research in and out-of-classroom training and projects was complimented with the opportunity to participate in a community-based field experience at a local partner site. Students visited several potential sites during the first week of their fellowship, including local public health clinics, hospitals and NGOs. The students were placed in internships at sites of their choosing; for example, one medical student shadowed a physician periodically throughout the eight week fellowship.

Students expressed high interest in more clinical field experience opportunities in subsequent years. Because of the community-based research focus of the BCHF, we plan to grow our partnerships with the various hospitals, clinics and NGOs that we partnered with to be able to provide more opportunities in the future. Our field site partners shared this interest in growing the program to support their own work. Dr. Philip Chan, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Brown University, and Marcio de Oliveira Silva, Chief of Research at the Center Specializing in Diagnosis, Care and Research and São Rafael Hospital in Salvador, Brazil have committed to offering field experience placements and mentorship for both Brown and Brazilian students in year two of the fellowship. Community-based research is a central part of Dr. Nunn and Dr. Dourado's research, and is a top priority of President Paxson's Strategic Plan for 2015, "Building on Distinction" which cites integrative scholarship as a major area of focus.

### **Institutional Collaboration**

In addition to the summer fellowship student experience, the BCHF serves to formally unite the Brown University Brazil Initiative and the Universidade Federal da Bahia with the hope that this partnership will serve as the basis for many future collaborations and funding opportunities. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Brown University and UFBA was established in June 2014, which paved the way for our student fellowship, and will also allow us to receive Brazilian scholars, including public health researchers, biomedical scientists, physicians, and doctoral students as visiting fellows at Brown University in 2015. Dr. Luis Augusto da Silva, a scholar at UFBA is the first Brazilian candidate for the exchange; he met with potential collaborators and mentors at Brown during his visit in September 2014.



Dr. Ines Dourado will spend a semester at Brown University as a Visiting Scholar in Spring 2015. During this time, she will work with Dr. Nunn and other colleagues to develop research and programmatic collaborations related to HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases in Brazil. Dr. Dourado will be presenting her research on healthcare access of transgender individuals in Brazil at the Lifespan/Tufts/Brown CFAR Seminar Series, and will schedule other opportunities to share her research with the Brown community during her time in Rhode Island.

Dr. Nunn and Dr. Dourado are currently engaged in several manuscripts related to HIV/AIDS and public health, to be published in scientific journals. Many of the students who trained in Brazil will be publishing and presenting their findings at conferences and meetings, locally and abroad, in late 2014 and 2015. In addition to scientific publications and exchange opportunities, the partnership forged through the MOU will help to facilitate future grant

funding to create new research opportunities for Brown students, Brazilian students, and faculty members from Brown and Brazilian institutions.

### **Future Goals and Sustainability**

The BCHF achieved its proposed objectives of supporting innovative research to enhance HIV/AIDS care cascade outcomes in Brazil and promoting educational exchange between Brown University and Brazilian research institutions. This program is coordinated with Brown's Global Health Initiative and other similar training grants. Our goals for the next year are to replicate and expand this program, to bring more Brazilian scholars to Brown University, to expand the number of participants in our program, and to offer Brown University and Brazilian students more clinical fieldwork opportunities.



Along with supporting the projects of the Global Health Initiative and the Brazil Initiative, the Brazil Community Health Fellowship will collaborate across disciplines, will provide more extensive field experience placements, and will continue to produce valuable international experiences for students studying Portuguese, global health, international relations and other related concentrations.

Dr. Nunn has been awarded additional funding from the Office of Global Engagement at Brown University, the Global Experiential Learning and Teaching (GELT) Award, to develop a course and curriculum to train students in Global Health, research methods and HIV/AIDS in Brazil. This preparatory course in global experiential learning will be open to Brazil Community Health Fellowship awardees as well as other Global Health undergraduate and graduate students, and will be co-taught by Dr. Nunn and Dr. Dourado in Spring 2015. This course is designed to prepare fellows for their Brazilian field experience in Summer 2015. Dr. Nunn has trained over 120 students in community-based global health practice throughout her career, and has been a mentor and investigator on NIH funded T32 and R25 fellowships; she is also a co-investigator on the Brown University Minority Health and Health Disparities International Research Training Program (MHIRT), which provides global experiential training and research opportunities for undergraduate and medical students. MHIRT hosted two students at UFBA this past year and plans to continue to host students in Brazil, in partnership with BCHF and the Brazil Initiative.

In year two of our program, we will expand the clinical focus of our program. Dr Philip Chan and Dr. Marcio de Oliveira Silva are co-investigators and will help oversee our clinical work.

*“The BCHF program was unbelievably exciting and rewarding. I feel so privileged to have been a part of a program in which I learned so much about Public Health, Brazil and its health system, and HIV.”*  
– BCHF Student, 2014

**Table 1****Scientific Articles, Presentations and Abstracts Associated with the BCHF Collaboration, 2014-2015**

<b>Title</b>	<b>Journal and Publication Date</b>
“What’s pregnancy got to do with it? Late presentation to HIV/AIDS services in Northeastern Brazil.” Dourado I, MacCarthy S, Lima C, Veras MA, Kerr L, de Brito AM, Gruskin S.	AIDS Care, July 2014
“Quality, not just quantity: lessons learned from HIV testing in Salvador, Brazil.” MacCarthy S, Rasanathan JJ, Dourado I, Gruskin S.	Global Public Health, June 2014
“Contemplating abortion: HIV-positive women’s decision to terminate pregnancy.” Maccarthy S, Rasanathan JJ, Crawford-Roberts A, Dourado I, Gruskin S.	Culture, Health & Sexuality, January 2014
“‘Mind the Gap’: Learning from experiences in Peru and Brazil to address the challenges of implementation.” MacCarthy S, Reisner S, Perez-Brumer A, Bastos L, Hoffmann M, Nunn A, Bastos FI, Leite de Vasconcellos M, Dourado I.	Implementation Science, Under Review
“Late presentation to HIV/AIDS services among men who have sex with men from a poor urban center in northeastern Brazil.” MacCarthy S, Brignol S, Reddy M, Nunn A, Dourado I.	AIDS Care, Accepted
“Falling off the radar: Late presentation to HIV/AIDS services in Brazil among men who self-identify as heterosexual.” MacCarthy S, Brignol S, Reddy M, Nunn A, Dourado I.	BMC Public Health, Accepted
<b>Abstract or Presentation Title</b>	<b>Conference and Date</b>
“Testing the care cascade: Barriers to care among HIV-infected men in a large urban center of Brazil.” Michael Hoffmann	Innovation in Tackling Global Health Care Challenges Conference, October 24, 2014  CUGH Global Health Conference, "Mobilizing Research for Global Health", March 26-28, 2015
“Impact of HIV seropositivity on the socio-emotional lives of sexual minority men in Salvador, Brazil.” Elaine Hsiang	Physicians for Human Rights National Student Conference, November 9, 2014