

NIH Awards Grant to UC San Diego to Build Capacity in Informatics in Global Health

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The Fogarty International Center, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), today announced it will award more than \$9.23 million to eight global health informatics programs over the next five years, including a \$1.23 million grant to the University of California, San Diego to support the Biomedical Research Informatics for Global Health Training (BRIGHT) program.

The BRIGHT program was initially developed to build informatics capacity in medium- and low-income settings in Brazil. The funding will allow for expansion outside the city of São Paulo, to northern areas of Brazil and to Maputo, Mozambique, where residents of the UCSD Department of Medicine rotate as part of the Global Medicine program at Maputo Central Hospital, Universidade Eduardo Mondlane.

The program will train future scientific leaders in these two countries in use of the tools of genome science, biomedical and health informatics. Informatics - the science of computing with large volumes of information - will help link physicians and researchers around the world so they can share knowledge, ranging from the best health care practices to new discoveries resulting from collaborative research.

"Our aim is to concentrate on health areas of particular relevance to Brazil and Mozambique and that have high impact on global health, such as HIV/AIDS, cervical, colon and breast cancer," said lead investigator Lucila Ohno-Machado, MD, PhD, founding chief of the Division of Biomedical Informatics in the UCSD Department of Medicine.

Co-principal investigator from Brazil is Heimar Marin, RN, PhD, from Federal University of São Paulo. Additional investigators include Sandro de Souza, PhD, from the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in São Paulo, Chris Seebregts from the University of South Africa, and Americo Muchanga from Universidade Eduardo Mondlane in Maputo. The faculty encompasses a variety of disciplines from different U.S. institutions. At UC San Diego, participating faculty and researchers come from the departments of medicine, computer science, bioengineering, pharmacology and from Calit2.

Fogarty's Informatics Training for Global Health program is intended to increase informatics expertise in low- and middle-income countries by training scientists to design information systems and develop new algorithms to analyze biomedical data. Biomedical sciences are data intensive, and generating knowledge depends largely upon sharing such information.

"The application of informatics allows our clinicians in low-resource settings to leverage new technologies in order to speed discoveries," said Fogarty Director Roger I. Glass, MD, PhD. "These new awards will enable researchers to better analyze data, compare results among populations and quickly share findings with colleagues around the world."

The BRIGHT researchers plan to address the different training needs of applied and basic informatics research through distinct programs: a one-year certificate program and distance-based programs aimed at

meeting immediate human resource needs in applied biomedical and health informatics, and a five-year doctoral program that emphasizes basic informatics research motivated by real-world problems.

"Building capacity in informatics is critical in order for countries to develop effective partnerships and work together toward the containing epidemics and managing chronic diseases. It is also central to enabling multi-centric, basic, translational, and clinical research related to a variety of health conditions," said Ohno-Machado.

The Fogarty grants are being awarded to both new and ongoing informatics programs at various international sites. Participating with Fogarty as NIH funding partners in the informatics training program are the National Library of Medicine and the National Human Genome Research Institute.

For more information, see the Web site for the Informatics Training for Global Health program at: http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/training_grants/itgh/index.htm

Fogarty, the international component of the NIH, addresses global health challenges through innovative and collaborative research and training programs and supports and advances the NIH mission through international partnerships. For more information, visit: www.fic.nih.gov.

For more information on the Division of Biomedical Informatics at UC San Diego, visit: <http://dbmi.ucsd.edu>.

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