HPTN International Scholars Program: The experience of international scholars: Cohort 1

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Introduction

• 2015: First cohort of International Scholars: Emilia Jalil (Brazil), Jesne Kistan (South Africa)
• Based at the Perinatal HIV Research Unit as a sub-investigator working on HPTN 052, HPTN 075 and HPTN 077 clinical trials
• Attended the HPTN Annual meeting in 2015; watched domestic scholars present work, Prof LGB present on HPTN 067
• Awareness of the program: HPTN scholar call sent to all research sites via email
• Project: a sub-study of HPTN 067 looking at acceptability and adherence of PrEP among South Africa women of varying age groups
Scholars application process

Requirements

• Project proposal based on available studies, NIH biographical sketch, motivational letters from mentor and employee, PHS 398 Grant application
Scholars application process

- Letters of support: engage with mentor prior to application process, engage with employer for support
- PHS 398: familiarity with grants, discussions with financial departments of institutions
- Project proposal: awareness of research currently being conducted, awareness of research protocols, case report forms (available on website)
- Ask the ISP co-ordinator: Erica Hamilton is hands on, willing to help.
First experiences

• Orientation in Seattle: meet with domestic and international scholars, essential for networking and collaboration
• Meeting with co-ordinators: David Serwadda, Erica Hamilton: essential orientation into the program
• Introduction to SCHARP: discuss face-to-face requirements
• Monthly calls: learning opportunity, progress reports, supportive mechanism
Challenges of the program

• Mentor-mentee contact time: due to being in different cities. Creative meeting opportunities: visit to the PHRU, annual meet, calls, emails

• Statistical support: based in Seattle, possible misinterpretations of requirements, fitting into a demanding environment – forward planning

• Moving to an governmental organization – financial support does not continue. This excludes a large proportion of medical doctors from these opportunities.
Benefits of the program

• Learning experience: research, statistics, writing skills, mentored by world renown leaders
• Collaboration with other members of the network; published an opinion piece for the Lancet HIV
• Writing skills improved; published in the Royal Society of School and Hygiene
• Job opportunities; acceptance into the Department of Community Health Medicine Registrar training program
• To present work at the Annual meeting
• To complete a manuscript and submit for publication
Tips for new scholars

• Build a supportive network: mentors, employers
• Be cognizant of HPTN clinical studies – utilize the website
• Awareness of deadlines: application, progress report, manuscript deadlines
• Maximise opportunities within the network: actively seek learning opportunities
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The HPTN International Scholars Program
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