

# Lessons from an international collaboration to pilot the UBC interprofessional Health Mentors program in Brazil

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## Background

People living with chronic health concerns have important life and health care experiences that can enrich interprofessional education (IPE).

Since 2011, Patient & Community Partnership for Education has coordinated an Interprofessional Health Mentors program (HMP) at the University of British Columbia (UBC), Canada.

The HMP is an elective educational experience in which teams of students from different disciplines learn from and with a mentor who is an expert by experience in living with or caring for someone with a chronic condition or disability.

It provides learning relevant to interprofessional competencies with an emphasis on patient/client-centred collaborative practice that has made it attractive to health professional programs in other countries. In Brazil, it was implemented at Bahiana School of Medicine and Public Health (BAHIANA), Salvador, Bahia.

## Rationale for BAHIANA pilot

BAHIANA, a Brazilian institution that trains health professionals and researchers, aims to provide experiential learning as extension programs to first year students. The following contextual factors at Bahiana made a health mentors program feasible:

- Outpatient clinics
- Partnerships with governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGO)
- Multiprofessional programming (Medicine, Nursing, Physiotherapy, Psychology)

Previous contact with the Interprofessional Health Mentors Program led to a partnership to apply this interprofessional education model in Brazil.



Brazil – Population 214 million  
Bahia – Population 15 million  
Bahia – HTLV 135,000 infected



## Research Question

How to adapt the program to best support the participation of students and mentors from different sociocultural backgrounds?

## Design of the pilot

### Participants

- **5 Health Mentors** (registered in the outpatient clinic at BAHIANA) and members of HTLVida.
- **16 Students** (Medicine, Nursing, Psychology and Physiotherapy).
- **4 Supervisor professors** (gave feedback in the reflective journal of the students)

### Methodology

- Qualitative design using an ethnographic approach

### Data

- Reflective journals, interviews and focus groups

### Objectives

1. Investigate the adaptations required for the Brazilian context.
2. Identify learning outcomes, strengths and challenges found in interprofessional practice.
3. Apply the lessons learned to improve the intervention and expand the number of participating students, mentors and outpatient clinics.

## Community Partner

The HTLVida Association (NGO) advocates for public policies to support people living with Human T-lymphotropic virus 1 (HTLV) in the State of Bahia. It is made up of resilient citizens, who despite their unfavorable socio-economic and demographic profile, aggravated by living in vulnerable areas, fight for their rights.



## Key Program Changes

- Alliance between the Dean of Research and the Dean of Extension with interconnected projects (research, education and outreach).
- Translation of the UBC project and language adaptation for mentors in Brazil.
- Selection of students prepared to participate in the Mentors Program as experiential learning.
- Faculty supervisors are professors of practices in the HTLV outpatient clinic

### Change in structure:

- Added 2 “Integration” meetings with students and mentors separately to qualify and raise awareness of interprofessional teamwork and encourage the role of the mentor as an educator.



Integration Meeting 2023

- Team meetings on the BAHIANA campus due to vulnerability and insecurity in the neighborhoods where the mentors live.
- Support from BAHIANA's Extension Pro-Rector with transportation and coffee-breaks.



## Mentor Experience

I'm very happy with all the care, respect and affection we are having in this program

Adijeane Oliveira de Jesus  
(Health Mentor)

This is so good for us. We have to show to people that it is possible to live with happiness even with HTLV.

Maria das Graça Bispo Machado  
(Health Mentor)



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Health Mentors Symposium 2023



## Student Learning

Development of sensitive listening for people with chronic illness and understanding the importance of interprofessional practice. **“Unforgettable experiences!”**

It shows me the need to work together. Since patient-centered care often cannot be fully met by just one area, we all must understand the roles of other professionals.

Medical student

It is up to us to value the individual and their subjectivity, have better communication within the multidisciplinary team, treat people as people, and not treat them as what led them to seek help, in other words, the pathology.

Psychology student

## Conclusions / Lessons Learned

Excellent practice to support equity, diversity and inclusion in patient engagement, as well as transformative learning about teamwork and interdisciplinary care.

## Next Steps

Expand to include patients living with:

- Epilepsy, rare disease, mental health conditions

## Reference

The expert patient as teacher: an interprofessional Health Mentors programme. Towle, Brown, Hofley, Kerston, Lyons & Walsh. Clinical Teacher (2014) 11: 301–306

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