



March 29, 2020

UNC Faculty Council Awards Committee

Re: Adaora A. Adimora, M.D., M.P.H.

Dear Colleagues:

I met Dr. Adaora Adimora when she enrolled in my introductory epidemiology course in August, 1988. She has just arrived in North Carolina to take a position as Assistant Head in the Communicable Disease Branch of the state health department. After completing a master's of public health degree in our Department of Epidemiology and joining the faculty in the UNC School of Medicine, Dr. Adimora invited me to collaborate with her on an NIH grant. In 1995, HIV was still a death sentence and, in the U.S., dramatically more prevalent in African Americans, including in rural parts of our state. Dr. Adimora had encountered this disparity in her analysis of Childbearing Women HIV Seroprevalence data for the NC health department and subsequently among her patients in UNC's Infectious Disease Clinic.

Following discussions with colleagues in the NC Communicable Disease Control Section, Dr. Adimora and I designed a study of heterosexually-acquired HIV among African Americans in eastern NC. While we awaited news about our grant proposal, a seminar by Martina Morris prompted us to examine concurrent sexual partnerships as a potentially key contributor to the heterosexual HIV epidemic among African Americans. When our study was funded, we incorporated measures of concurrent partnerships and published some of the first data on their relationship to heterosexually acquired HIV in African Americans. Over the subsequent 15 years we secured three additional grants on concurrent partnerships, their prevalence, contextual factors that might influence prevalence, and possible responsiveness to ad campaigns:

1. Analysis of data from the 1995 U.S. National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), which yielded some of the first national estimates of prevalence of concurrent partnerships among women; prevalence among African Americans was nearly twice that among other women.
2. Analysis of data from the 2002 NSFG, which yielded national prevalence estimates for men, identified several important correlates, and found that concurrency prevalence was greater in counties with low sex ratios, high poverty, and/or more violent crime.
3. Mass media demonstration project, which suggested that an 8-month campaign of provocative radio ads could shift attitudes among young African American adults, so they were less favorable to concurrency.

Our initial study involved household interviews on highly sensitive topics with a population that has been traditionally difficult to involve in research and might provide erroneous data due lack of trust or lack of investment in the interviews. Compounding the difficulty, many prospective participants could not be reached by telephone and did not return letters, so that interviewers needed to visit their homes repeatedly, sometimes driving 100-200 miles for each visit. Dr. Adimora recruited and motivated a staff who could relate to the prospective study participants and monitored the progress of the study effectively. She reviewed

all completed interviews, recruitment statistics, and accumulating data to ensure protocol adherence, recruitment rates, and accurate data recording. She adapted the research protocol when some initial assumptions proved incorrect. She gave presentations to the state's Disease Investigation Specialists, encouraging them to present our study to new HIV positive persons. Thanks to her leadership and hard work, our first study succeeded in meeting its recruitment goal, with good data, leading to several presentations at national and international meetings and four peer-reviewed papers in leading journals. In all her research projects she demonstrates initiative, follow-through, and conscientiousness; in one she reviewed partnership histories for over 1,000 women. She makes strategic decisions and avoids pitfall of “interminable analysis”. In addition to her research articles, she has made many presentations and published important review articles and book chapters.

Dr. Adimora's writing is characterized by critical evaluation of the evidence, openness to new perspectives, and thorough knowledge of relevant literature, including in areas outside her previous training. Her publications have made a major contribution to understanding the U.S. HIV epidemic, and heterosexual transmission of HIV among African Americans in particular. The importance of her work and insights is demonstrated by the numerous invitations she has received to participate on major national panels, including the Presidential Advisory Committee on HIV/AIDS (PACHA), a Distinguished Professorship, and her recent election to the National Academy of Medicine.

Dr. Adimora has served as a wise, dedicated adviser and mentor to many students (including several of my own), fellows, research staff, and junior colleagues. She generously shares her research data and/or assists them in using other data, supports them in completing degrees, and in launching research careers. She leads or co-leads major UNC collaborations: the Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Program, the Women's Interagency HIV Study, and, most recently, the Center for AIDS Research. These are all indicators of excellence in teaching. During the two decades leading up to my retirement, Dr. Adimora has been my primary research and academic collaborator. Her professional and personal qualities – in regard to her abilities and to her character – are exemplary. She thoughtfully balances the many competing demands in her life and is a model of dedication, empathy, and concern for justice.

In summary, Dr. Adimora has demonstrated excellence in teaching, research, and service to the University, the nation, and to the world. Dedicated to advancing knowledge in ways that contribute to the improvement of public health, she has made stellar contributions to the health of all people and especially the disadvantaged. She has served the University, State, and Nation in various capacities, ranging from search committees and the Faculty Council to NIH, CDC, and White House committees. The UNC Faculty's highest award would be a fitting recognition of her all-around dedication to excellence and accomplishment.

Yours sincerely,



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