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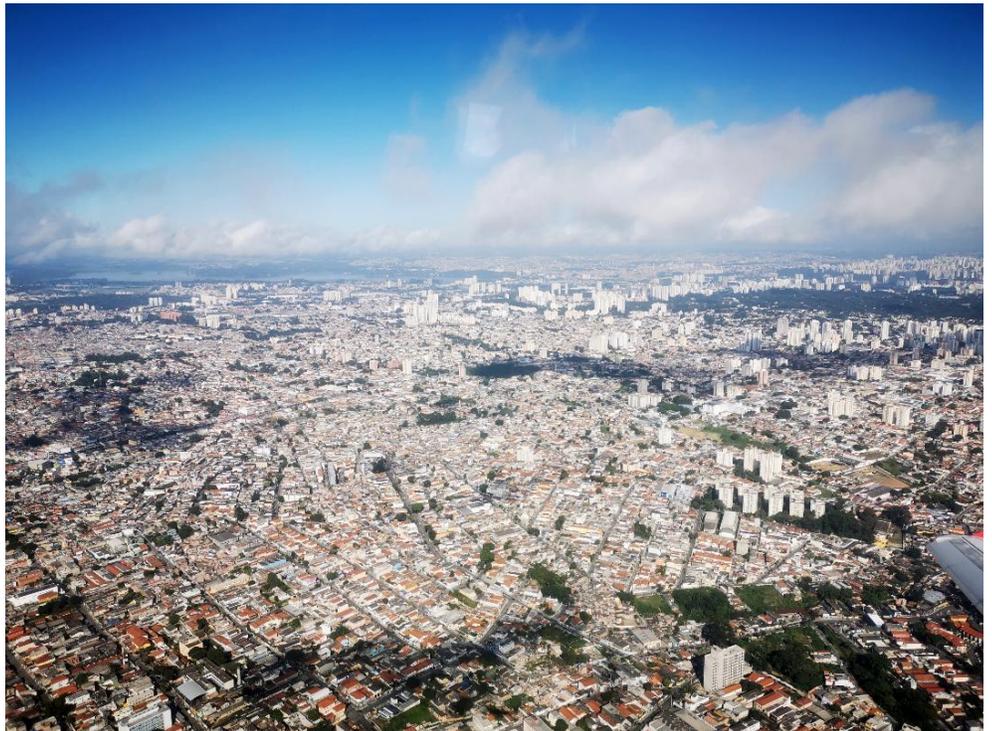
Developing innovative child malnutrition supplements in Brazil

Creative writer Jean McNeil visited the Brazilian partner of the GRTA Child Malnutrition sub-project in early March 2020. The Deinfar lab, in São Paulo, Brazil, is developing micro-nutrient supplements, which will be subsequently tested by children and parents. The sub-project aims to develop innovative low-cost supplements suitable for children, and scale-up production and commercialisation in four low- and middle-income countries.

The GRTA Child Malnutrition project

The Global Research Translation Award (GRTA) project is funded from the UK government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Innovation and Commercialisation Programme, developed to fast-track promising research findings into real-world solutions. UEA is leading a £1.36 million project to help tackle health, nutrition, education and environment issues in developing countries.

One of these sub-projects is working with Dr Sheng Qi (School of Pharmacy, University of East Anglia) to develop low-cost and child-friendly micronutrient supplements with regional partners in Brazil, Jordan, Malaysia & Thailand. The project aims to build capacity for research and development within the four countries to enable future development of similar products independently. The project is using creative writing and film-making to effectively communicate with supplements users, the general public and local governments, highlighting the importance of a balanced nutritional diet for child growth and development.



São Paulo city from the air

What is the role of [Sheng's lab](#)?

Dr Sheng Qi and her team are focused on developing innovative and accessible technologies to tackle unmet healthcare needs. By working with industrial partners as well as cross-discipline collaborators, Sheng's group is aiming to contribute to the interdisciplinary research area of enhancing the therapeutic effects of supplements and drugs via tailoring the dosage forms and the physical chemistry of drug formulations.

➤ [Watch a short video of Sheng's work](#)

Taking the core technology platform developed by Sheng during her previously funded UEA QR GCRF project which ended in October 2019, the Global Research Translation Award enables Sheng to collaborate with leading academics in Official Development Assistance (ODA) countries to produce micronutrient supplements. Each partner will adjust micronutrient supplement composition based on deficiencies within local populations, and develop relationships with industrial partners in their own countries to maximise local capabilities for the long-term and low-cost production of supplements.

The Deinfar laboratory in Brazil

Jean McNeil, a creative writer at UEA, flew to the University of São Paulo (USP) to visit the Deinfar lab in the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences in March. The Deinfar lab was specially created to interact with the pharmaceutical industries interested in seeking innovation and knowledge generated within the University. Jean filmed an interview with the lab lead, Dr Gomes Ferraz, to gain background and insight into his collaboration with Sheng. Jean met with Dr Gomes Ferraz's colleagues and students at the lab and filmed the production of the prototype supplement samples at the Deinfar lab.



What happens next?

Jean now has enough material to develop the content for information leaflets, which will be distributed to school children and parents for subsequent testing of the products in Brazil. The GRTA Partners in Jordan, Thailand and Malaysia are also working on the formulation development and consulting with pharmacists, paediatricians and supplement producers. Back at UEA, Sheng and Research Associate Thomas McDonagh are investigating some simple, cheap and novel approaches to produce fast disintegration oral films using biopolymers from food wastes that are abundant in the partner countries, to be able to share further learning with their partners.



NB. The Covid-19 pandemic is likely to have an impact on the timely progress of the GRTA project, as some of the labs are in lockdown and international travel is disrupted.

Jean McNeil is a Reader in Creative Writing in the School of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing at UEA. Sheng Qi is Reader in the School of Pharmacy at UEA. Blog written by Elettra Spadola, GRTA Project Administrator at UEA. Photos by Jean McNeil.

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