

# Meet a Scientist: Dr. Carolina Ramôa

Meet Dr. Carolina Ramôa! She is a type of scientist called a **pharmacologist**. Pharmacologists study how chemicals like medicines or drugs affect our bodies.

Carolina is an expert on tobacco and how it affects the body. Her work helps prevent people from using tobacco products.

Carolina works for the United States government. She is a scientist for the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA regulates items like food, medicines, and tobacco. As part of her job, she gives scientific advice to the people writing laws related to tobacco and public health.



We interviewed Dr. Carolina Ramôa to learn more about her!

## What was your childhood like? Did you like science?

I grew up in an immigrant family from Brazil. We spoke Portuguese at home. My dad was a medical scientist. He shared his love of science with us. You could often find us at science museums.

I have vivid memories of my little brother and his bug collection. He collected grasshoppers and butterflies. I always loved science.



Carolina dressing up for Halloween as a child.

My parents believed, as I believe, that education is important. My mom devoted hours and hours to helping me study and learn.

My parents supported my education and love of learning. However, some of my extended family members did not want me going away to college and moving out of my parents' home. They thought I should do other things instead. But I wanted to go to college, and so I did. I wanted to make my own choices.

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## Describe a typical day at your job.

Most of my work is at a computer! I research and write about how different government **policies** will affect people's health.

I also research about tobacco products and tobacco use. I am an expert on how tobacco affects our bodies and brains. I want to help people using tobacco to quit, and to make sure young people don't start to use it!

I come up with experiments that I and other scientists can research. I recommended policies and laws that our government could put in place to help protect public health.

## What path did you take to get your job?

In college, I studied biology and **neuroscience**. Neuroscience is the study of the brain. In college, I also worked in a neuroscience laboratory. There I started to learn how to do experiments!

Then I went to graduate school to get a degree called a Ph.D. I got my Ph.D. in neuroscience. I learned how different chemicals and drugs affect the brain.

## Describe a time in your career when something did not go as planned.

Like everyone, I had many challenges in my path to my current job. For example, the job I was supposed to take after finishing my PhD did not work out. I found myself jobless!

I sent out hundreds of emails to find a job. It took many months. I eventually found a news article about a scientist who had been awarded a large grant to study tobacco products, and I emailed him. That email turned into a job!

## What advice do you have for students today?

Education is a gift! Education gives you knowledge, options, and power. Take every opportunity you can to learn. And believe in your abilities, your value, and your worth. Everyone has something wonderful to offer.