



RCMI Newsletter



Administrative
Core



2nd RCMI
Symposium on
Health Disparities



Future Scientists:
Inés María
Mendoza School,
Cabo Rojo

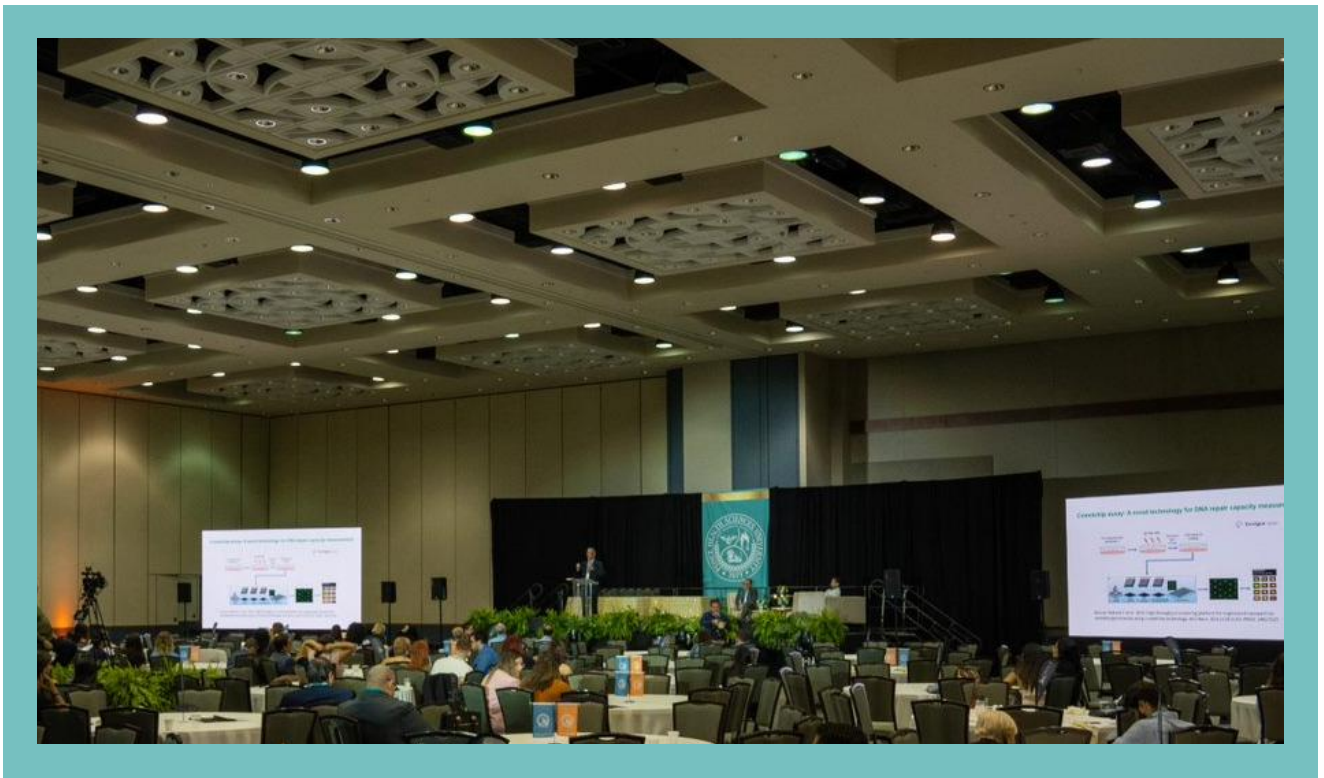


Publications



RCMI Symposium
on Health Disparities

Special Edition



On May 6, 2023, the RCMI Program was honored to present our 2nd Symposium on Health Disparities at the Ponce Research Institute's 18th Annual Scientific Conference. The objectives were to showcase groundbreaking discoveries and recent advances in research pertaining to health disparities. The Symposium included three panel discussions, highlighting important topics such as Prostate cancer, Gender Minorities, and Elderly Communities, all of which are extremely relevant to the communities we serve.

2nd RCMi Symposium In Health Disparities

Elderly Communities Panel



Moderator
Normarie Torres, PhD
Ponce Health Sciences
University



Speaker
Eida Castro, PsyD
Ponce Health Sciences
University



Speaker
Francisco Torres Lozada, MD
PHSU Family Medicine
Department



Speaker
Andrea Delgado Peraza, MD,
Guest Speaker

Discussion Panels

Prostate Cancer Panel



Moderator and Speaker
Jaime Matta, PhD
Ponce Health Sciences University



Speaker
Gilberto Ruíz-Deyá, MD
Centro Medico Episcopal Hospital
San Lucas, Surgery Department



Speaker
Julio Jiménez, MD
Ponce Health Sciences University

Gender Minorities Panel



Moderator and Speaker
Alixida Ramos
Ponce Health Sciences University



Speaker
Caleb Esteban, PhD
Ponce Health Sciences University



Speaker
Iván Meléndez, MD
Centro Ararat, Inc.

2nd RCMi Symposium In Health Disparities



Keynote Speaker

Yarimar Carrasquillo, PhD
Researcher
National Center for
Complementary
and Integrative Health, NIH

View Full
Gallery



2023 RCMI Consortium National Conference Washington, DC - April 12 - 14, 2023

Biopsychosocial Predictors of Tumor-associated Inflammation and Progression



Dr. Guillermo Armaiz and Dr. Eida Castro

Drs. Eida Castro and Guillermo Armaiz presented their RCMI-sponsored project at the 2023 RCMI Consortium National Conference. Their study aims to identify biopsychosocial risk factors (depression, social-environmental adverse events [SEA], stress) for tumor-associated inflammation and elucidate their role in women's breast cancer progression. Drs. Castro and Armaiz shared important preliminary results. For example, most cancer patients and survivors lived under the poverty line and considered their income insufficient to cover their living expenses. Over half of participants reported symptoms of depression and anxiety, whereas most reported at least one SEA, and three-quarters reported over four SEAs. Interestingly, several inflammatory markers, such as IL-1, were positively correlated with the stress hormone cortisol. Finally, the group showed data supporting the role of behavioral stress on the progression of breast cancer in mouse models. Their presentation was well received by the audience and highlighted the efforts made by PHSU trainees.

Community Training Institute for Health Disparities (CTIHD)

Health disparity research promotes the development of academic-community partnerships. Therefore, the community must have basic knowledge and skills to participate equally. Under the Community-Based Participatory Research approach, the PSHU-RCMI-Community Engagement Core (CEC) established three aims focused on education, dissemination, and the implementation of the Community Training Institute for Health Disparities (CTIHD) for community capacity building, assessment, co-developing comprehensive community needs, and identifying community priorities. These aims will create culturally appropriate strategies to translate research findings and community health education.

The CTIHD comprises the Research Program (RP) and the Health Education Program (HEP). These develop community-researcher partnerships and Community Health Promoters, respectively. Forty-six community trainees have received training at the CTIHD, with 37% belonging to the poverty group. The RP has successfully established community-academic partnerships and developed three proposals focused on cancer, obesity, and mental health. The HEP designed eight educational outreach plans and implemented five.



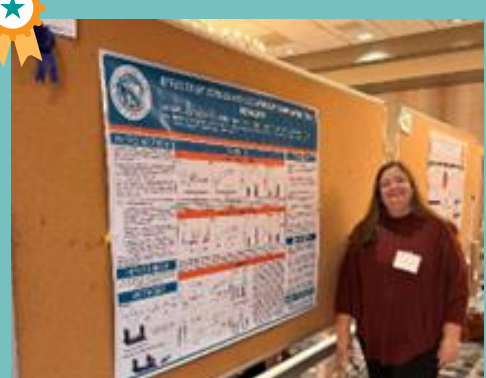
Dr. Melissa Marzán and Dr. Julio Jiménez

2023 RCMI Consortium National Conference Washington, DC - April 12 - 14, 2023 Poster Presentation

Drs. Marian Sepúlveda and Normarie Torres were recognized for merit, as they were in the top 12% of the Conference's posters sessions.



Normarie Torres Blasco, PhD
Development of communication intervention among Hispanic/Latinxs patients and caregivers coping with cancer



Marian Sepúlveda, PhD
Effects of Stress and Cocaine Exposure on Seeking Behavior



Richard Noel, PhD
Strategic Academic Research Training: A Pilot Project Program to Improve Outcome



Margarita Bonilla, DMD
Role of Distress in Cancer Survivors' Periodontal Health



Melissa Marzán, PhD & Julio Jiménez, MD
Community Training Institute for Health Disparities: Promoting Health Disparities Research by Developing a Community Research Capacitation Program




Doris Andújar, MPH
Using Network Analysis to Understand Collaboration Patterns

Strategic Academic Research Training

Investigator Development Core

Enhances scientific diversity in junior faculty scholars.




**PONCE RESEARCH
INSTITUTE**
PONCE MEDICAL SCHOOL FOUNDATION INC.

RCMI START CORE

Strategic Academic Research Training

Jamboor K. Vishwanatha, Ph.D.
Principal Investigator, National Research
Mentoring Network




The Importance of Mentoring

**ACADEMIC RESEARCH CAREER ADVANCEMENTS
FOR JUNIOR RESEARCHERS IN PHSU/PRI**

Place: Academic Building D - Room 101
Date: Friday, May 5, 2023
Hour: 11:30am - 1:00PM
Please Confirm Attendance

Participation required for RCMI Funding
In collaboration with RCMI Administration



RCMI Program Grant U54MD007579

For information please contact

María Santiago marsantiago@psm.edu | Frances Irizarry firizarry@psm.edu

PHSU faculty can enroll in START through the following link:

 <https://bit.ly/3Ha23en> 🔍



“ My ongoing research interest is to learn more about mental health and suicide risk factors among Hispanic/Latinx adolescents in Puerto Rico and the US. I want to focus my research on understanding how suicide and mental health stigma are related to the use of mental health services, especially adherence to psychological treatment and treatment outcomes in youth with suicidal behavior. I am also interested in developing interventions to reduce suicidality and suicide stigma. ”



MEET

Norka Polanco, Ph.D.

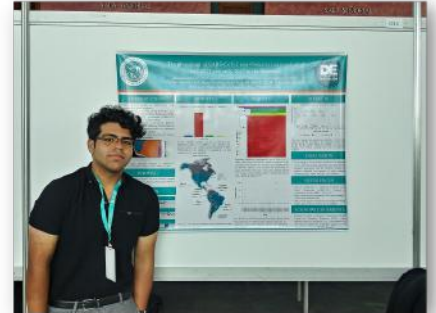
Assistant Professor

Future Scientists

High School Students Science Club

Mentoring by Vanessa Rivera, PhD

Last year, Dr. Vanessa Rivera-Amill (PI) and Mr. Pablo López-Colón (Research Technologist), alongside the Department of Education of Puerto Rico, discussed a collaborative effort with multiple high schools around the island. The primary objective was to provide community services through the Center for Research Resources by teaching essential molecular biology laboratory techniques to students and foster an interest in science careers by offering theoretical and practical experiences, allowing students access to laboratory methods, supplies, and tools.



Dr. Lucille Oliver-Cebollero, a chemistry teacher at the Inés Maria Mendoza School in Cabo Rojo, showed great enthusiasm and kickstarted the initiative. After an initial meeting of only two students, more joined soon after.

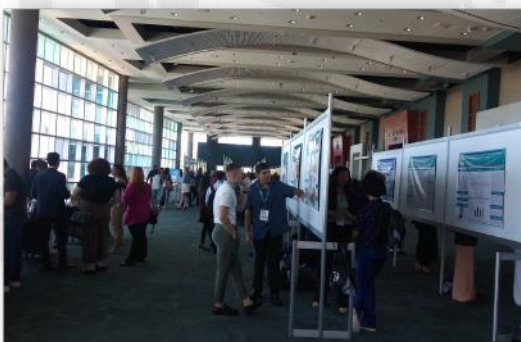


The seminars covered a wide range of topics: fundamentals of molecular biology, laboratory supplies, lab safety, DNA extraction, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) procedures, and electrophoresis. Throughout the project, students delved into various fields such as soil microbiology, fisheries, bioinformatics, and public health.

The students submitted abstracts to the 18th PHSU-PRI Annual Scientific Conference & 2nd RCMI Symposium on Health Disparities, held in May 2023. Four were accepted for poster presentations in a new session titled "Future Scientists."



This experience has taught us that we should continue to foster an environment of curiosity and innovation and empower these brilliant young minds to push the boundaries of knowledge. These future scientists hold the key to unleashing groundbreaking solutions, tackling the complex challenges we face as a global community, and improving the quality of life for all.



Publications



Eliut Rivera Segarra, PhD
Assistant Professor

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and previous natural disasters on the mental health of healthcare workers in Puerto Rico



Melissa Marzán Rodríguez, DrPH
Assistant Professor

Epidemiological intelligence community network intervention: A community response for COVID-19 community transmission



Normarie Torres Blasco, PhD
Assistant Professor

Importance of Communication Skills Training and Meaning Center Psychotherapy concepts among patients and caregivers coping with advance cancer

Save the Date!



EXTERNAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING



RCMI Program Grant US4MD007579

Location: To Be Announced
Date: November 1-3, 2023

rcmi@psm.edu



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