

RCMI Newsletter

Special Edition

17th PHSU-PRI ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE / 1st RCMI SYMPOSIUM ON HEALTH DISPARITIES



PONCE RESEARCH INSTITUTE

This year, the 17th PHSU-PRI Annual Scientific Conference and the 1st RCMI Symposium on Health Disparities were joint events at the Hilton Ponce Golf and Casino Hotel on Saturday, May 7th, 2022. The goal was to highlight the ongoing research activities at our institution and our affiliated hospitals, including both oral and poster presentations, and to create awareness of health disparities in our community.



RCMI Symposium

Scientific Conference

Alumni

Awardees

Judges

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[CLICK HERE TO CHECK OUT THE PHOTO GALLERY](#)

MEET

DR. ELIDIA RODRÍGUEZ ALIER (Community Scientific Advisory Member)



Esta fue mi primera experiencia en este tipo de actividad organizada por PHSU - PRI. Al pertenecer al comité asesor científico comunitario me extendieron la invitación, ¿y cómo negarme de poder obtener de primera mano tanta información importante y necesaria en estos tiempos? El nivel de los recursos, las presentaciones, el ambiente tan profesional y la organización hicieron que resultara una magna actividad. La visita al pabellón de los "posters" fue interesante y la entrega de reconocimientos muy emotiva. Por último, de principio a fin, mejor que lo esperado.



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Acknowledgements

RCMI acknowledges the Committees for their hard work and excellent organization of these events:

1st Annual RCMI Symposium Committee

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- **Richard Noel Jr., Ph.D**
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Message from the Meeting Chairs



José A. Torres-Ruiz, Ph.D.
PHSU Chancellor & Vice President of Academic Affairs
RCMI Contact Principal Investigator

Welcome to our RCMI Newsletter Special Edition! This year's RCMI Symposium covered very important health disparities topics that currently affect disadvantaged populations. We succeeded in creating a forum to raise awareness of these inequities and to discuss current studies that try to reduce these gaps. For next year's symposium, we will up our ante and encourage our scientific community to stay tuned.

After a two year wait thanks to COVID, the inaugural PHSU RCMI Health Disparities Scientific Conference not only met my expectations, it exceeded them. The attendance was strong and had a good balance of students, faculty, and clinicians from the community. I know people enjoyed the presentations by the audience participation in the excellent panel discussions and by the fact that most attendees stayed through the whole event. I can't wait for next year!



Richard Noel Jr., Ph.D.
PHSU Chair of Basic Sciences Department
RCMI Principal Investigator



Kenira Thompson, Ph.D.
PHSU Vice President of Research
President of Ponce Research Institute

The PHSU/PRI Scientific Conference and Health Disparities Symposium highlighted our ongoing commitment towards solving the most pressing health challenges for the Hispanic community. I am extremely proud of our team of researchers that continue to work together as part of our efforts to pursue high quality research in the basic, clinical, public health, and behavioral sciences with a strong emphasis in health disparities.

1st RCMI Symposium on Health Disparities

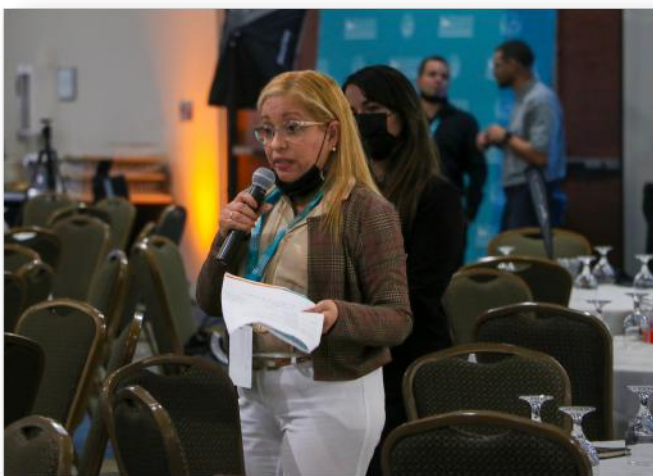


Soreli M. Santana, MPH, DrPH

The symposium kicked off with a plenary on health disparities by Dr. Larissa Avilés-Santa, Director of the Clinical and Health Services Research of the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), titled: "Quo Vadis? Where are We, and What are We Doing to Reduce, Resolve or Eliminate Health Disparities?," providing an overview of the perspective from NIMHD.

Dr. Avilés-Santana discussed how health disparities can occur due to lifestyles, an individual's response to stress, genetics and epigenetics, the physical and cultural environment that surround us, and also health care itself. Disparities result in higher incidence and prevalence of diseases, a higher burden of disease, increased and premature mortality, and poorer quality of life in minority populations within the US. The Hispanic/Latino community was highlighted among the minority populations that experience health disparities in the US as well as the importance of conducting research in these communities to bridge the existing gap.

Diabetes Panel



The first panel discussed the topic of diabetes and was led by three experts: Dr. Larissa Avilés-Santa; Dr. Jeffrey S. González, Director of the New York Regional Center for Diabetes Translational Research of the Albert Einstein College of medicine; and Dr. Jessica Irizarry, Assistant Professor of the Public Health Program of PHSU. Dr. Yaritza López, Interim Director of the School of Behavioral Sciences In Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU) moderated the session. The panel provided an overview of the research history of diabetes in the Latino population and described the current understanding of the prevalence of prediabetes and diabetes in the Latino population in the United States. In addition, patterns in type 2 diabetes health disparities between Latino and non-Latino groups in the United States were identified and discussed as well as the role that socioeconomic factors, diet, acculturation, and racism play in explaining these differences. Regarding the issue of diabetes in Puerto Rico, the epidemiological profile was reviewed along with the main social determinants of diabetes that affect Puerto Ricans.

Obesity Panel



The second panel discussed the topic of obesity and was led by three experts: Dr. Jessica Irizarry; Dr. Emily Sáez, Assistant Researcher of the Psychology Research Institute of the University of Puerto Rico; and Edithmar Gustavo, registered Dietician and Nutritionist of MMM Multi-Health Group. Dr. Richard Noel, Chair of the Basic Sciences Department of PHSU and PRI-RCMI Principal Investigator, moderated the session.



The panel discussed obesity health disparities in the Puerto Rican population by describing its epidemiologic profile and the main social determinants and inequities of obesity and overweight in Puerto Rico. The inequities and health disparities that affect the relationship between obesity and mental health problems were also explained, particularly in the younger populations. Another topic of interest was how food insecurity affects obese people, where the speakers mentioned the limitations related to this population and how we can improve the food insecurity problem.



Hypertension and Cardiovascular Disease Panel



The third panel discussed the topic of hypertension and cardiovascular diseases. As the previous two, the panel was led by three experts: Dr. José A. Torres-Ruiz, PHSU Chancellor & PRI-RCMI Contact Principal Investigator; Dr. Félix Pérez, Assistant Professor of the School of Medicine in PHSU; and Dr. Jorge Duconge, Assistant Dean of Research and Graduate Program of the University of Puerto Rico School of Pharmacy. Dr. Karen Martínez, Professor of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Puerto Rico, moderated the session. This panel began with an overview of health disparities in both cardiovascular diseases and hypertension in the United States. It continued explaining the different existing types of hypertension, its risk factors and causes, and the long-term complications that can arise.



The conference concluded by summarizing the current clinical treatments and Precision Medicine-based implementations among cardiovascular patients, and by highlighting the effects of biomarkers on predicting better medical outcomes for the cardiovascular population.



In the end, the overall goal to disseminate information on current issues impacting the health disparities was met and we hope our future symposiums help promote the need to create novel strategies to prevent and reduce the current gaps in our local communities.

17th PHSU/PRI Annual Scientific Conference

SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE SPECIAL GUEST: SPECIALIZED SCHOOL IN SCIENCES AND MATHEMATICS THOMAS ARMSTRONG TORO



La experiencia ha sido muy buena porque he podido aprender muchísimo. En la escuela tenemos la clase de investigación donde tenemos que realizar una investigación. Así que me ha servido para familiarizarme con todo este ambiente de lo que son las ciencias y ver algunas ramas de las ciencias que tal vez no conocía. Ahora estoy más familiarizada y tengo más seguridad a la hora de presentar mi propuesta de investigación.

Las ciencias realmente son el estudio de todo. La ciencia es todo lo que nos rodea. Entender las ciencias y estudiarlas me va a ayudar a entender qué soy y qué está a mi alrededor. Me va a ayudar a entender todo mi ambiente.

Ileanis Astacio Rodríguez
High School Student



Alumni Hall of Honors

Eida M. Castro Figueroa, Psy.D., M.Sc.



Dr. Castro Figueroa is an Associate Professor at the PHSU-School of Behavioral and Brain Sciences as well as the PHSU-School of Medicine Psychiatry Department. She is a clinical psychologist with extensive experience and training in clinical, translational, health disparity, and community-based participatory research.

Dennis J. Yang Wu, MD



Dr. Dennis Yang graduated from Ponce School of Medicine as the Class Valedictorian in 2008. He then completed his internal medicine residency at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. After, he pursued a gastroenterology fellowship at the University of Florida followed by a fellowship in advanced endoscopy at Mount Sinai New York. Dr. Yang is currently a Professor of Medicine at the University of Central Florida. He has published over 150 peer-reviewed articles in his subspecialty of interventional endoscopy.

Mohammed R. Milad, Ph.D.



Mohammed R. Milad (Moh) is a tenured professor of psychiatry, Director of the Behavioral Neuroscience Program within the Department of Psychiatry, Director of Psychiatric Neuroimaging Core, and investigator at the Neuroscience Institute within the NYU Grossman School of Medicine. Moh is also a research scientist at the Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research in NY state.

Melissa Marzán Rodríguez, DrPH, MPH



Dr. Melissa Marzán Rodríguez obtained her bachelor's degree in anthropology from the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Río Piedras Campus. She has a master's degree in public health with a specialty in epidemiology from the UPR Medical Sciences Campus and a doctorate in the same specialty from Ponce Health Sciences University. She completed her post-doctoral training in HIV prevention and implementation science in partnership with Northwestern University and the UPR Medical Sciences Campus.

Basic Sciences

Poster Presentation

- 1. Carla M. Barrientos Risso**
Aberrant lipid metabolism and alternative macrophage activation in therapy-resistant prostate cancer
- 2. Lubriel Sambolin Escobales**
Peripheral and Ventral Hippocampal Long-chain Ceramides Correlate with Depressive-like Behaviors in Rats
- 3. Orlando Torres Rodríguez**
Sex-dependent effects of microglial depletion in an animal model of PTSD

Oral Presentation

- 1. Carmen Ortiz-Sánchez**
Overall DNA repair capacity as a potential tool to improve prostate cancer diagnosis
- 2. Janeishly Román González**
Shugoshin-1 Depletion Reduces Tumor Growth in Triple-Negative Breast Cancer
- 3. Nashaly Irizarry Méndez**
Effects of reducing FKBP5 expression in the ventral hippocampus on PTSD-related behaviors

Behavioral Sciences

Poster Presentation

- 1. Christian E. De León-Casillas**
Spanish-speaking cancer patients' preferences for smartphone apps designed for cancer symptom self-management
- 2. Grace De Hoyos Castro**
The Impact of Environmental Enrichment on Quality of Life, Perceived Stress and Pain in Women with Endometriosis
- 3. Aldrick Adorno-Adorno**
Impact of COVID-19 on Utilization of Integrated Behavioral Health Services in a General Hospital

Oral Presentation

- 1. Kevin Caballero**
Pain & Burnout in Caregivers
- 2. Lilliana Hernández Martínez**
A psychoeducational intervention to cancer patients, survivors, and caregivers to prevent adverse mental health symptoms related to natural disasters
- 3. Glorymar López Garayúa**
The Impact of COVID-19 Lockdown on the Prevalence of Pediatric Depression

Public Health

Poster Presentation

- 1. Jania P. García Zeno**
Guardians of Health: Virtual Educational Intervention against the Aedes aegypti Mosquito during the COVID-19 pandemic
- 2. Ariana, C., Cotto Vázquez**
Acceptability of SORA: An endometriosis-focused mobile app
- 3. Ana V. Soto-Sánchez**
Recommendations From Latinx Trans And Non-binary Individuals Regarding Cancer Prevention and Screening

Oral Presentation

- 1. Karen Ocasio Rivera**
Repercussions and psychosocial effects on students and professors at Ponce Health Sciences University after remote education in the face of the Covid-19 emergency
- 2. Rachel M. Rodríguez Santiago**
Post-acute sequelae of COVID-19 in outpatients from a southern laboratory in Puerto Rico
- 3. David F. Santos Malavé**
Retinitis Pigmentosa in Puerto Rico: a geographic distribution.

Awardees

Clinical Studies

Poster Presentation

1. Jerry Arraut-Álvarez

Second Dose of Dexamethasone Reduces Postoperative Opioid Consumption, Pain, and Length of Stay in Primary Total Knee Arthroplasty

2. Cristina Sánchez Rizek

Use of biodegradable antibiotic-coated beads as an adjunct in the treatment of vascular graft infection

3. Axel J. Santiago Carlo

The Analysis of Medical White Coats as Vectors for Drug-resistant Organisms in Manatí Medical Center

Oral Presentation

1. Raymond Linares Medina

Re-examining the Application of Prostate-Specific Antigen levels to Distinguish between Aggressive and Low-Risk Prostate Cancer

2. Caren Abreu

Clinical Features and Distribution of Aggressive Prostate Cancer in Puerto Rican Men: A Preliminary Assessment

3. Cristina I. Nieves-Vázquez

Feasibility and acceptability of an environmental enrichment intervention for endometriosis patients

Clinical Cases

Most Distinguished - Poster

Milaris M. Sánchez-Cordero

Unusual Presentation of Pseudomyxoma Peritonei Secondary to Rectal

Most Distinguished - Oral

Natalia P. Ríos García

Is Scurvy extinct? Not in Autism Spectrum Disorder patients: Case Report



PRI recognizes the support of the judges from the following institutions:

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University of Puerto Rico - Río Piedras & Mayagüez Campus

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Carlos Albizu University

Chiropractic and Oriental Medicine

Mayagüez Medical Center

Manatí Medical Center

Ponce Research Institute

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