



About our Partnership

The geographic proximity and large Hispanic populations in Florida and Puerto Rico have driven the formation of an academic partnership between the Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU) and the Moffitt Cancer Center (MCC). The objectives of the Partnership are to build a long-term cancer research infrastructure at the PHSU and increase the participation of the MCC in cancer research and education programs in the Hispanic population.



The PHSU-MCC Partnership is a grant supported by NCI's Comprehensive Partnership to Advance Cancer Health Equity (CPACHE). It primarily focuses on developing and improving cancer care outcomes for Hispanic cancer patients in Puerto Rico and Florida who are currently under-served with respect to cancer care, personalized medicine, and participation in clinical trials. The Principal Investigators of this partnership are: Dr. Jaime Matta (PHSU, Contact PI), Dr. Kenneth Wright (MCC, Contact PI), Dr. Julie Dutil (PHSU), and Dr. Alvaro Monteiro (MCC).

Welcome to the Community Health Educator!



Brenda I. Ramos González, MPHE has a master's degree as a Public Health Educator, with a special interest in community outreach. Before joining the Partnership, Ms. Ramos worked at Susan G. Komen Puerto Rico as an Education and Banderas Programs Coordinator. As the Partnership's Community Health Educator (CHE), Ms. Ramos works closely with the Outreach Core in the planning and implementation of community outreach and educational activities. She will contribute to the planning and evaluation of Partnership outreach efforts and research. Ms. Ramos' efforts will focus on the Hispanic/Latino (H/L) communities in the Tampa Bay area as well as Southwestern Puerto Rico. She will also collaborate with

the NCI's National Outreach Network (NON) to develop and disseminate culturally appropriate, evidence-based cancer information that is tailored to the specific needs and expectations of the H/L communities.

Engaging Our Community

PHSU-MCC Joint Virtual Event

The Bridge is an event that brings cancer investigators and community leaders together with the purpose of improving the understanding of cancer research and community participation. Usually, each partner institution hosts a separate Bridge event; however, due to COVID-19, a joint virtual event was held on August 15, 2020. The Bridge focused on Precision Medicine and featured presentations from Partnership researchers and other institutional guest speakers followed by a Q&A session.



Latinos y el cáncer Webinar Series: "A celebration of our heritage and health" MCC Virtual Activity



Like many of our life events this year, our biggest biennial event in Tampa, *Latinos y el cáncer* transformed to fit our new normal. Rather than hosting a single in-person event, the Tampa Outreach Core created a webinar series during Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15th- October 15th) to provide our community members an array of cancer topics, specifically tailored to the H/L population. The webinar series featured presentations on the following topics:

- Lung Cancer
- Blood Cancer
- Gastrointestinal Cancer
- Women's Cancer
- Kidney Cancer
- Thyroid Cancer
- Nutrition and cancer
- Screening and Voucher information

The new virtual format provided an opportunity to enhance outreach efforts by providing a means with which the seminars could be posted on social media platforms (e.g., Facebook) and further expanding our reach beyond the Tampa Bay area to a larger and more diverse population. On average, each presentation had an estimated Facebook reach of over 150 community members.

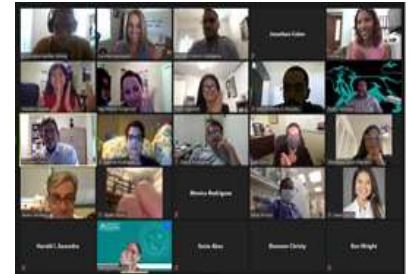


Lidiando con la Salud Mental en Eventos de Desastre. The objective of this study was to explore how acceptable and possible it was to provide mental health support remotely to cancer patients affected by natural disasters (e.g., earthquakes) and other disaster experiences (e.g., COVID-19 pandemic). Using the Community-based Disaster Mental Health Intervention, culturally adapted for the Puerto Rican population, a series of psychoeducational workshops, consisting of two interviews, were developed and administered to 82 participants remotely using Zoom Meetings. These were residents primarily from the communities of Guánica, Ponce and Yauco. The virtual modality of psychoeducational support showed to be an acceptable intervention for people affected and impacted by disaster experiences, especially for hard-to-reach populations. In response to the workshops, 15 participants requested mental health support and were successfully referred to an appropriate provider.

Virtual Cancer Seminars. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Research Education Core (REC) transitioned the PHSU cancer seminar series from in-person to a virtual format. Since Spring 2020, the REC has offered a total of 3 virtual cancer seminars ranging from ovarian cancer to how COVID-19 affects cancer patients and cancer care. With the virtual format, the REC cancer seminars now reach a wider audience, including MCC investigators and USF students. In addition, all cancer seminars are recorded and posted on the REC Online Library (<https://psmmcc.litmos.com/account/login>) for future viewing.

REC Summer Students Rotations

During the summer, the COVID-19 pandemic presented several challenges for the educational events under the Research Education Core (REC). The REC rapidly transitioned most of its activities to a virtual format including summer research student rotations. Despite the enormous challenge of having to do their research rotations in a virtual setting from home, the selected ten trainees from PHSU and USF excelled in the summer program by successfully working with their respective labs remotely and completing their assigned projects. In addition, the trainees attended virtual seminars, completed both the Omics Experience and Health Disparities courses offered by MCC, and participated in weekly scientific communication mini workshops as part of their summer experience. The program culminated with each trainee giving a 10-minute oral presentation in a joint zoom videoconference to faculty, investigators, and students from MCC and PHSU. We now look forward to publication of some of these summer research efforts soon!



Pre-doc to Post-doc Transition Program



Claudia Colon-Echevarria, MPH, PhD. The U54 Pre-doc to Post-doc Transition Fellow, Claudia Colon-Echevarria, PhD, successfully defended her thesis “*Chronic stress promotes cancer associated inflammatory processes*” on September 29, 2020 under the guidance of Dr. Guillermo Armaiz-Peña and her thesis committee. As part of the Pre-doc to Post-doc Transition Program, Claudia will soon relocate to MCC for her post-doctoral studies under the mentorship of Dr. Shelley Tworoger and Dr. Heather Jim. The Pre-doc to Post-doc Transition Program is a mechanism under the Research Education Core (REC) that places future scientists on a cancer research career path with support and mentorship. This program serves as a bridge for the PhD candidates as they obtain their degree at PHSU and move forward to their post-doc in cancer research at MCC. On behalf of the REC, congratulations to Dr. Claudia Colon-Echevarria and we wish her much success in this new stage of her career.