



Summer 2022 Newsletter

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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 and Moffitt Cancer Center. The complementary expertise at both institutions provides a synergistic means of studying the cancer problem in Puerto Ricans, and in the Hispanic population in general.

The Partnership's focus is on developing and improving cancer care outcomes for Hispanics in Puerto Rico and Florida by enhancing cancer care, personalized medicine, participation in clinical research and understanding the underlying basic mechanisms of cancer.

The PHSU-MCC Partnership is supported by a grant from the National Cancer Institute. The Principal Investigators are: Dr. Jaime Matta (PHSU, Contact PI), Dr. Kenneth Wright (MCC, Contact PI), Dr. Julie Dutil (PHSU), and Dr. Alvaro Monteiro (MCC).

ARBOLES Familiares



Drs. Kristi Graves (Georgetown University) and Susan Vadaparampil (Moffitt Cancer Center) lead the **ÁRBOLES Familiares** (Assessing Risk of Breast Cancer through Outreach to Latinas with Education and Support) NCI-funded R25 training program. The goal of **ÁRBOLES Familiares** is to educate bilingual community health workers, promotoras, health educators, and patient navigators to identify and refer Latinas at high risk of hereditary breast and ovarian cancer to genetic services. Through our 16-week training course trainees will gain the skills to increase their knowledge about genetics, genetic counseling, and testing.

Our most recent in-person 3-day training held from June 1st-3rd, 2022 in San Juan, Puerto Rico where 29 trainees from across the island came together. The U54 Outreach team in Tampa and Ponce worked closely with the **ÁRBOLES Familiares** team to plan and conduct a very successful in person training which consisted of various interactive activities and presentations. Faculty included national and local experts including Dr. Julie Dutil and Brenda Ramos from Ponce Health Sciences University and Dr. Ana Cecilia Salar and Dr. Jessica Hernandez from the University of Puerto Rico. After the in-person activities, trainees will complete a series of online modules and an action project to apply what they have learned. To date, the program has trained over 250 bilingual professionals in community settings from across the U.S.



The Bridge (Joint Virtual Event)



The Bridge is an event that brings investigators and community leaders together with the purpose to improve the understanding of the cancer research and community participation. The purpose of this year's The Bridge event, which was held on Friday, August 5, 2022, was to discuss HPV and related cancers. Three speakers participated during the Charla. Dr. Elba Diaz, Oncology Odontologist, gave us the introduction to HPV, it's symptoms and how it is one of the most common cancers affecting mouth and neck at the moment. Our second speaker, Dr. Melissa Marzán, Epidemiologist, presented preliminary results on her study called Men Preventing HPV, which was also held in Tampa, Fl. Another project presented during our activity was Characterization of the high-risk human papillomavirus genotype in the southwestern region of Puerto Rico by Dr. Lynnette Ruiz, Researcher and Assistant Professor in PHSU. With a total of 31 attendees, participants had the opportunity to clear doubts as well as to bring suggestions to the investigators for future projects and activities.

¡Salud! Serie de Charlas Women's Health: Let's Prevent Cancer



During the month of May, the Outreach Core (OC) had its first in-person activity since de COVID-19 Pandemic lockdown in Florida. The OC collaborated with the Moffitt's Community Outreach, Equity and Engagement (COEE) Department and the Farm Workers Ministry in Auburndale, FL during this activity. The activity was a *¡Salud! Serie de Charlas* offered by our CHE, Brenda Ramos. The topic was gynecological cancers, we discussed how to reduce the risk of developing breast, cervical and ovarian cancer; also, we had Viviana Suárez, from MCC's COEE, to talk about Moffitt's services. We received 29 women, most of them in reproductive age, from countries like Mexico, Honduras, Guatemala, and Ecuador. Their principal health access barriers have to do with their migration status, language (some of them do not even speak Spanish, they speak dialects), literacy (some don't know how to read or write), and in some cases, domestic violence. The Farm Workers Ministry work to empower farmworkers and former farmworker families through programs fostering self-sufficiency, healthcare, social services, employment, and education. On the other hand, we want to thank Dr. Guillermo Armaiz and Dr. Alvaro Monteiro for providing information and educational resources about ovarian cancer for this activity.



CAB Meeting Feedbacks

The involvement of community members in community-based health research is valuable for identifying needs and accessing issues of the target population, health promotion, increasing recruitment rates, and providing input on the creation of culturally sensitive materials. As such, the U54 PHSU-MCC Partnership utilizes a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) to inform and guide overall outreach activities in PR and FL. Each CAP (Ponce/Tampa) is comprised of cancer patients/survivors, family/caregivers, and representatives from healthcare, community- and faith-based organizations, and other minorities among the Hispanic and Latinx populations. This past year CAP members helped the Outreach and Administrative Cores offering feedback about the competitive renewal. CAP members have insisted in the necessity of creating rapport between researchers and community members, not just for community-based research but also to basic sciences research. This rapport is built by keeping community members informed and educated about research, research projects and their results. Language and the way it is used is important, CAP members are aware that communicating in a comprehensible language for the community members is key to keep a trusting relationship. Increasing the ways to communicate with community members- including radio, TV, newspaper even student's organizations- will help to expand reach. To them is also important to ensure the diversity of community members by including specific concerns, for example LGBT+ populations

. Welcome our Incoming ESIs (Early-Stage Investigators)

Dr. Bruna Pellini

(Development of clinical trials with novel therapeutics targeting genomic alterations in non-small cell lung)



Dr. Bruna Pellini is an Assistant Member at the Department of Thoracic Oncology at H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and an Assistant Professor at Morsani College of Medicine at University of South Florida. She received her medical degree from the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, and completed her residency at University of Central Florida College of Medicine, where she was awarded the "Clinical Skills Award" in 2015 and was inducted into the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society in 2016. Dr. Pellini completed her medical oncology fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, where she worked at the laboratory of Aadel Chaudhuri, MD, Ph.D. researching circulating tumor DNA for molecular residual disease detection across different solid tumors. Dr. Pellini is an active member of the Lung Cancer Center of Excellence and the Molecular Medicine Committees at Moffitt Cancer Center. She specializes in the care of patients diagnosed with lung cancer. Her research interest lies in the development of clinical trials with novel therapeutics targeting genomic alterations in non-small cell lung cancer, to study liquid biopsies as a biomarker to monitor treatment response and molecular residual disease, and to study the genomic and transcriptomic landscape of lung cancer in patients of Hispanic ancestry.
