

## Report of the 2013 University of Puerto Rico- MD Anderson Cancer Center Conference entitled “Research on Cancer Epidemiology: Risk Factors and Control in the Caribbean Basin”

**A**n interdisciplinary conference entitled *Research on cancer epidemiology: Risk factors and control in the Caribbean basin* was held on February 21-22, 2013 in Isla Verde, Puerto Rico (PR) under the U54 grant infrastructure, a Partnership for Excellence in Cancer Research between the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) and the MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC). This conference was organized by the Biostatistics and Bioinformatics Core (BBC) led by Erick Suárez (UPR-MSU) and Kenneth Hess (MDACC). This year the BBC organized this conference with the aim of enhancing existing networks and partnerships as well as forming new ones in the Caribbean countries. The conference was the first conference held in PR focused cancer research methodological issues in the Caribbean basin. Speakers from different countries (PR, Jamaica, Colombia, México, Peru, France, United Kingdom, and USA) talked about their experiences in cancer-related research in the Caribbean countries. A total of 100 participants attended the conference. This report summarizes various speakers' presentations, which included specific methodological issues in the areas of epidemiological design, criteria for cancer diagnosis, framework for social determinants of cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer, cervical cancer, gastric cancer, nutrition, and prevention and control efforts mainly in the Caribbean countries.

### Scientific highlights

#### Speakers of the first day

*Robert A. Hiatt, MD, PhD*, Director of Population Sciences and Deputy Director of the University of California at San Francisco (UCSF) Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. Among Hiatt's research interests are: cancer epidemiology especially breast cancer, prevention and screening, and the social determinants of cancer. His central focus at UCSF is to build a strong, interdisciplinary program in epidemiology and cancer population sciences. His talk addresses the concept and challenge for transdisciplinary science and social determinants of cancer.

*Guillermo Tortolero, MD, PhD*, Director of Cancer Control and Population Sciences Program at the University of Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center (UPRCCC). As prior faculty member of the Department of Gynecologic Oncology at the University of Texas MDACC and the UT Houston School of Public Health, he has experience conducting population and clinic-based research studies. His talk highlighted the activities

that have been implanted based on the plan entitled *Cancer burden and cancer control strategies in Puerto Rico*.

*Jorge Gómez, MD, PhD*, Senior Advisor in National Cancer Institute (NCI) Center for Global Health (CGH) focused on supporting and advancing international collaboration and partnerships in scientific and clinical cancer research, training, and infrastructure development in Latin America. His talk addressed the current status of the *Latin America Cancer Research Network Model* and highlighted the activities for increasing the research capacity building in Latin America.

*Camille Ragin, PhD, MPH*, Associate Professor in the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at Fox Chase Cancer Center, Philadelphia. Her research experience has allowed her to establish a network of collaborators, which stemmed her conceptualization of the African-Caribbean Cancer Consortium (AC3), a research group designed to promote collaboration among cancer researchers who focused their work in populations of African ancestry. Her talk addressed the cancer burden in the Caribbean through capacity building and collaborative research.

*Maria Jackson, PhD*, Senior Lecturer at the Department of Community Health and Psychiatry University of the West Indies Mona, Kingston, Jamaica. Dr. Jackson conducts nutritional epidemiological research on prostate cancer, obesity in adults and children, and iron deficiency anemia in young children as key health issues relevant to populations of African origin. Her talk highlighted her research findings regarding the associations of circulating vitamin D and calcium with prostate cancer in Jamaican men.

*Bernard Rachet, MD, PhD*, Senior Lecturer in Cancer Epidemiology at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, London, England, United Kingdom. Dr. Rachet worked mainly on cancer risks associated with occupational and environmental exposures, and on developments in methodology. His talk highlighted the activities related with the Concord program and the assessment of cancer survival from global to local.

*Erin Kobetz, PhD, MPH*, Director of the Center's Disparities and Community Outreach Core Resource, University of Miami (UM) Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Kobetz established Patn en Aksyon (Partners in Action), a campus-community partnership between UM Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and key community-based organizations in

Little Haiti, the predominantly Haitian area in Miami. Her talk addressed cancer disparity among Hispanics in Miami and the lessons learned and future challenges, based on her experience in Little Haiti.

*Paulo S. Pinheiro, MD, PhD*, Assistant Professor at the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health, School of Community Health Sciences, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada, United States. His recent work has focused on improving the recognition of Hispanic ethnicity among recorded cancer cases as well as subgroup in the Hispanic population of the US and finally the changes of risk when Hispanics immigrate to the US. His talk highlighted the Hispanic paradox and the case of Puerto Rico using the data of cancer incidence and survival.

#### Speakers of the second day

*Juan Martínez-Cruzado, PhD*, Professor at Department of Biology University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus in Puerto Rico. He is well known for his pioneering work on the Amerindian ancestry of most mitochondrial DNA molecules in the Puerto Rican population. His talk addressed the methodology and the research results related with the ancestry distribution of cancer polymorphisms in Puerto Rico.

*Margarita Irizarry-Ramírez, PhD*, Professor at the School of Health Professions in the Medical Sciences Campus of the University of Puerto Rico. Dr. Irizarry-Ramírez is also a researcher in the field of prostate cancer. Her main goal is to try to unravel the causes for the high mortality rate in men with prostate cancer in Puerto Rico. Her talk addressed the current status of the research project entitled “*Prostate cancer risk and aggressiveness in Puerto Rico: Ancestry and polymorphisms*”.

*Vivian Colón-López, PhD, MPH*, Assistant Professor at the Center for Evaluation and Sociomedical Research of the University of Puerto Rico Graduate School of Public Health (UPR-GSPH) and an Investigator at the Comprehensive Cancer Center (UPR-CCC). She has worked closely with the UPR-GSPH in multiple research projects in the areas of drug use abuse and infectious diseases in men and women from the metropolitan area of San Juan. Her talk addressed the current status of her research activities with HPV-related cancers and HPV infection in Puerto Rican men.

*Isabel Torres, DrPH*, Associate Professor at the University of Houston, Graduate College of Social Work. Her current area of research addresses ethnic health disparities in palliative cancer care with an emphasis on the factors that ultimately influence access to, and the quality of advanced cancer care among underserved or vulnerable populations. Her talk addressed her experiences with Palliative cancer care in Latin America and the Caribbean.

*Maria Dominguez-Bello, PhD*, Faculty member at the Department of Biology, University of Puerto Rico, and the

New York University School of Medicine. She works on gut microbiomes of animals and humans, including digestive symbiosis, developmental ecology, microbiome and human health, and impact of modern lifestyle practices on the microbiota. Her presentation addressed the prevalence of *H. pylori* and digestive cancers in Latin America.

*Francisco Javier Torres-López, MD*, Infectious Diseases Research Unit, Pediatric Hospital, 21st Century National Medical Center, Mexican Social Security Institute. His talk highlighted the current status for searching biomarkers in the early detection of gastric malignancies.

*Oscar Fernando Herrán-Falla, ND, MSc*, Escuela de Nutrición y Dietética Centro de Investigaciones Epidemiológicas (CIE), Universidad Industrial de Santander Bucaramanga, Santander, Colombia. His interest is in nutritional epidemiology. He has studied the diet quality in Colombia and developed and validated questionnaires to measure alcohol consumption and dietary Colombian population. He addressed the results to validate a questionnaire (FFQ) to assess the relationship between nutrition and cancer in Colombia.

*Maribel Almonte, MPH, MSc, PhD*, Scientist of Prevention and Implementation Group, Section of Early Detection and Prevention at the International Agency for Research on Cancer, Lyon, France. Dr. Almonte is founder of the Latin American Cervical Cancer Prevention Consortium which main objective is to prevent deaths from cervical cancer in the Latin American region. Her talk highlighted the future of cervical cancer prevention in Latin America and the Caribbean.

## Conclusions

The speakers' presentations fully met the conference goals and the expectations of participants. According to the BBC evaluation, 99% of participants were very satisfied or satisfied with general aspects of the conference such as content, organization, schedule, facilities and speakers' expertise. Furthermore, approximately 98% of participants either agreed or strongly agreed that the topics were relevant and useful for their professional performance, that the conference fulfilled their expectations, and they would recommend this conference to others. Some of the talks offered in the conference are available on the Internet through the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLf5LkdIKuHr6oEWzNag8HVSmDzOITs6u6>. In conclusion, the assessment of new approaches in the Caribbean will contribute to better understanding of the effect of cancer prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and control in this community. This conference helped to lay the groundwork for the development of a comprehensive research agenda to address methodological issues in cancer-related research among the Caribbean countries.

## Acknowledgments

Funding for this conference was made possible in part by NIH NCI U54 grant CA96297 and CA96300 “UPR-MDACC Partnership for Excellence in Cancer Research Program”; by NIH NCMHD U54 grant MD007587-03 PR Clinical and Translational Research Consortium; by NIH NIMHD G12MD007600 Research Centers in Minority Institutions Program, UPR MSC; by the UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center; and by institutional funds from the UPR Medical Sciences Campus Deanship of Academic Affairs and Deanship of Administration. The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

---

**Erick Suárez**, PhD, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico; **Marivelisse Soto-Salgado**, MS, UPR/MDACC Partnership for Excellence in Cancer Research Program, School of Medicine, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico; **Camille Moreno-Gorrín**, BS, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico; **Ana Patricia Ortiz**, MPH, PhD, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico; Cancer Control and Population Sciences Program, University of Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, Puerto Rico; **Cynthia M. Pérez**, PhD, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Graduate School of Public Health, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, Puerto Rico

---

## • CORRECTION •

**Dentogingival Complex: Dimension Based on Biotypes.** *Karol Ramírez DDS, MS; Omar García-Rodríguez, MS, DrPh; Margarita Murillo-Arocho, DDS; Ottón Fernández-López, DDS, MSD; Augusto R. Elías-Boneta, DMD, MSD.* P R Health Sci J 2013;4:182-186.

There is an error of omission in the manuscript. The following statement must be mention. Post-doctoral Master of Science in Clinical and Translational Research Program (MSc)/Hispanic Clinical and Translational Research Education and Career Development Program (HCTRECD), **Award Number: R25MD007607.** HISPANICS-IN-RESEARCH CAPABILITY: SoHP & SoM PARTNERSHIP (HiREC) Endowment Program, **Award Number: S21MD001830.**