

Report of the 3rd Summit of Translational Research in Health Disparities and the 3rd Multidisciplinary Conference in Clinical Research

The joint clinical research initiatives of the School of Health Professions (SoHP) and the School of Medicine (SoM) at the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus (UPR-MSC) continues the tradition of promoting collaboration and networking by organizing the 3rd Multidisciplinary Conference in Clinical Research and the 3rd Summit of Translational Research in Health Disparities. This collaborative effort took place on February 23rd and 24th, 2012, in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and was mainly supported by three NIH grants, all three of which share a common mission: to increase the number of Hispanic researchers working towards eliminating health disparities. These local NIH-funded programs are: Hispanics in Research Capability (HiREC) Endowment Program, the R25 Clinical Research Education and Career Development (CRECD) Postdoctoral Master of Science in Clinical Research (MSc), and the Puerto Rico Clinical and Translational Research Consortium (PRCTRC). The first two programs are the result of joint initiatives of the UPR-MSC SoHP and SoM; the third one is a consortium of three local institutions with Research Centers for Minority Institutions (RCMI): UPR-MSC, Universidad Central del Caribe (UCC), and Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences (PSMHS).

In accordance with the mission and goals of the UPR, this event was organized in conjunction with other institutions and organizations. For this occasion, four other national minority institutions with postdoctoral clinical research education programs joined in the organization of the scientific program. These were the *Morehouse School of Medicine*, the *Meharry College of Medicine*, *Charles Drew University and Health Sciences*, and *Hawaii University at Manoa*. These partner institutions support and seek to enhance collaboration both between researchers in multiple disciplines and between institutions, encouraging shared growth, discoveries, and perspectives in science, education, medicine, and health care and that will eventually lead to a better quality life for the populations served by the participating institutions.

The theme of the conference was *Pathways towards Eliminating Health Disparities through Research Education and Career Development*. The Organizing Committee aimed to emphasize the importance of training as a way to encourage new researchers to devote their research agendas to the study of health disparities. Consonant with this aim, the three main meeting objectives were as follows:

- Disseminate successful strategies to optimize the capabilities and resources to conduct clinical and translational research.

- Promote the integration of effective models to develop independent clinical and translational researchers.
- Strengthen research education, training, and networking through information-technology tools.

Scientific Highlights

Recognizing that an important component of research-career development is access to adequate educational resources, the meeting organizers were pleased to welcome Mr. Bryant Pegrum and Mr. George Franklin, who brought with them an exhibit from the National Library of Medicine, NIH. The activity's scientific program followed the same format over the course of the two days, with a plenary session in the morning and two concurrent sessions in the afternoon. Dr. Estela S. Estapé presented an overview of the objectives of this Conference (1). Dr. Galen Switzer, co-Director of the PhD Program in Clinical and Translational Science, University of Pittsburgh, focused on the role of translational research training and education in the mitigation of health disparities and in the promotion of health equity (2).

The focus for the first day Plenary Session was translational research and the use of technology to help disseminate knowledge about health disparities. Kathryn Pollenz, MPH, Clinical and Translational Science Center (CTSC), Health Disparities Research Program Manager, Harvard Medical School, covered outreach strategies used both by researchers at Harvard and by the National Disparities Working Group and outlined successful models for disparities research training and mentoring. Dr. Lourdes E. Soto de Laurido and Prof. Carlos Ortiz, Director, Office of Informatics and Educational Resources, SoHP, shared their experience of "Disseminating Health Disparities Research Education Through a Multi-institutional Course, Networking, and Distance Learning" (3-4). Dr. Glenn Smith, Division co-Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Psychology, College of Medicine, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, talked about the initiative titled "Partnership for Rural and American Indian Research Education and Engagement (PRAIREE)," which initiative involved several Midwestern medical schools and universities.

During the concurrent sessions on day one, Dr. Adriana Baez, CRECD- MSc Clinical Research Coordinator and Professor, SoM, introduced the theme "Mentoring Models to Advance Research Career Development"; Dr. Sandra Harris-Hooker, Vice President and Senior Associate Dean for Research Affairs, Morehouse School of Medicine, presented "A Holistic Approach to Mentoring Research Trainees"; Dr. Luis Cubano, UCC

Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies, shared the multiple mentoring models that allowed a group to mentor students in different aspects of their professional development; and Dr. Marizaida Sanchez Cesareo, Director, Division of Community Services, Center for Evaluation & Socio-medical Research, Graduate School of Public Health, MSC-UPR, shared her experience of developing and applying an innovative, practical, and vertical-style mentorship model (5).

Dr. Edna Acosta Pérez introduced the Community Engagement concurrent session. “Recruitment and Retention of Under-represented Groups with Health Disparities into Clinical Trials: A Formative Approach” presentation was prepared by Dr. Rosanne Harrigan, Professor at John A. Burns School of Medicine, University of Hawaii at Manoa (6). Dr. Enid Garcia, Director of the Office of Clinical and Community Health Research, NIMHD-Endowed Health Services Research Center, SoM, and Dr. Julio Jiménez, Professor, Psychology Department, PSMHS, each presented different approaches for engaging and participating in community-based research with community members and agencies (7). They also shared their experiences using Community Based Participatory Research approaches in Puerto Rico.

The poster session included 48 abstracts from faculty members and students from local and national institutions. The posters were subdivided into several themes relevant to the topics of the conference, including Academic Entrepreneurship, Community Engagement, Research Career Development, and Health Disparities Research (See poster abstracts at the end of this report).

The Plenary session during the second day focused on entrepreneurial academics for the improvement of research education, health promotion, disease prevention, and the elimination of health disparities. Dr. Stephen Klasko, CEO for USF Health and Dean of the College of Medicine, University of South Florida, presented “What We Forgot to Teach in Health Sciences... and Why It Matters,” which presentation provided strategies for overcoming gaps in the knowledge of medical and health teams and suggested steps for ensuring an optimistic future in health care (8). Dr. Gualberto Rúaño, President, Genomas Inc., and Director, Genetics Research Center, Hartford Hospital, shared the concept of entrepreneurial academics being an opportunity to engage in clinical and translational research (9). That morning’s session was brought to a close with narratives recounting the experiences and reviewing the expertise of three innovators and entrepreneurs: Dr. Wilfredo E. de Jesús Monge, a CRECD- MSc graduate, Postdoctoral researcher and member, Center for Clinical & Translational Science, University of Massachusetts Medical School; Dr. Giovanna Guerrero-Medina, “*Ciencia Puerto Rico*” Director of Operations (10); and Dr. José Rodríguez Orengo, Professor, Biochemistry Department, School of Medicine, MSC-UPR, and co-Investigator, “*Fundación de Investigación de Diego*” San Juan, PR.

Three outstanding CRECD-MSc scholars presented their successes in translating research findings into actual practice to improve health, which information comprised a special concurrent session. Dr. Linda Laras, Director, “*Proyecto de Ayuda a Sobrevivientes de Violencia Sexual y Doméstica Orientado a la Salud (PASOS)*”, SoM, MSC-UPR; Dr Yanyuan Wu, Division of Cancer Research and Training, Department of Medicine, Charles Drew University and Health Sciences; and Dr. Stephania T. Miller-Hughes, Department of Surgery, School of Medicine, Meharry Medical College, shared with the audience their experiences regarding the development of their work into innovative service interventions, the establishing of public policies, and the building of multidisciplinary research teams.

During the last session, Dr. Augusto Elias Boneta, Assistant Dean of Research, School of Dental Medicine and Director of the Dental Medicine, NIMHD Endowment Program, MSC-UPR, gave an introduction to the theme *Health Care Disparities*. Finally Dr. Stephanie Luise Russell, Department of Epidemiology and Health Promotion, New York University College of Dentistry, and Dr. Kaumudi Joshipura, School of Dental Medicine, NIMHD Endowed Chair and Director, Center for Clinical Research and Health Promotion, MSC-UPR, presented their research targeting modifiable risk factors to reduce disparities in oral and cardiometabolic health.

Conclusions

The *Multidisciplinary Conference in Clinical Research and the Summit of Translational Research in Health Disparities* are activities aimed at helping disseminate achievements, facilitate networking, and share the best models for expanding and sustaining high quality clinical and translational research training programs that will enhance minority health and increase research activities aimed at understanding and eliminating health disparities. All the activities were geared to help define the course of action to be taken for the successful integration of clinical and translational research in education and practice to *eliminate health disparities*. The satisfaction of the participants was evaluated through a self-administered questionnaire. This conference was attended by 126 participants. Of those, 78 completed (61.9%) the satisfaction questionnaire. The majority of the respondents (37.7%, n = 29) were affiliated with UPR-MSc, followed by those affiliated with PSMHS (22.1%, n = 17; see Figure 1).

Overall, respondents (97.4% or more) indicated that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the organization, information presented, format, the expertise of the presenter/s, schedule, length, and facilities of the conference. Additionally, 98.0% or more of the participants indicated that they “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that this conference was relevant, fulfilled their expectations, and was one they will recommend to others. By the end of the conference, we had successfully disseminated

research education and career development pathways, promoted the integration of effective models to develop translational researchers, and facilitated networking to increase teamwork and research collaborations.

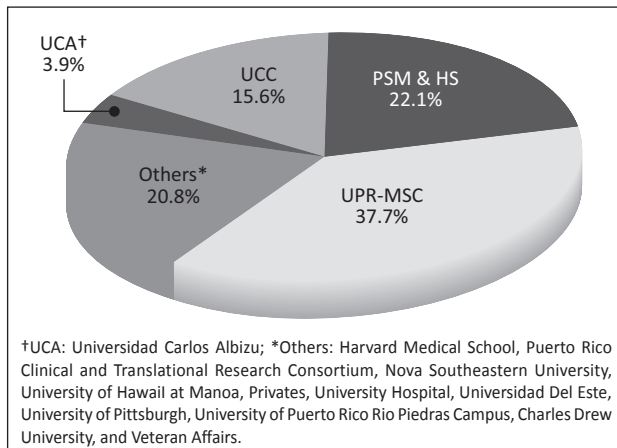


Figure 1. Participant Affiliation (n = 77).

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