



Newsletter

Puerto Rico Clinical and Translational Research Consortium (PRCTRC)



Seated from left to right : Dr. Walter Frontera, former principal investigator of the PRCTRC and Dr. Maribel Rodríguez-Torres, President of Fundación de Investigación. Standing from left to right : Francisco G. Bruno, COO & CFO, of Fundación de Investigación, Dr. Margarita Irizarry Ramirez, key function leader for Collaborations and Partnerships of the PRCTRC, Dr. José Rodríguez Orengo, Bioanalytical Laboratory Director of Fundación de Investigación and Dr. Carlos Luciano co Program Director and PI of the PRCTRC.

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A new partnership that expands the analytical capabilities of the PRCTRC and broadens the access of researchers to Puerto Rico's population

A Memorandum of Understanding for the establishment of a partnership was signed between the directors of the PRCTRC and of Fundación de Investigación (FDI). Both entities have agreed to share their human and technical resources, to jointly engage in clinical and translational research to address those health challenges prevalent in the Hispanic population. The MOU was signed between the President of the FDI, Dr. Maribel Rodríguez-Torres and the representatives from the institutions that are members of the PRCTRC, represented that day by, its then Principal Investigator, Dr. Walter Frontera.

“It is very important for us to develop partnerships with other research intensive organizations, such as the PRCTRC. These partnerships allow us to continuously advance in research in such fields as cancer and liver diseases. This partnership with the PRCTRC brings in a liaison with

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Collaborative effort to present a workshop on “Understanding Genetic Admixture and its Implications for Complex Diseases.



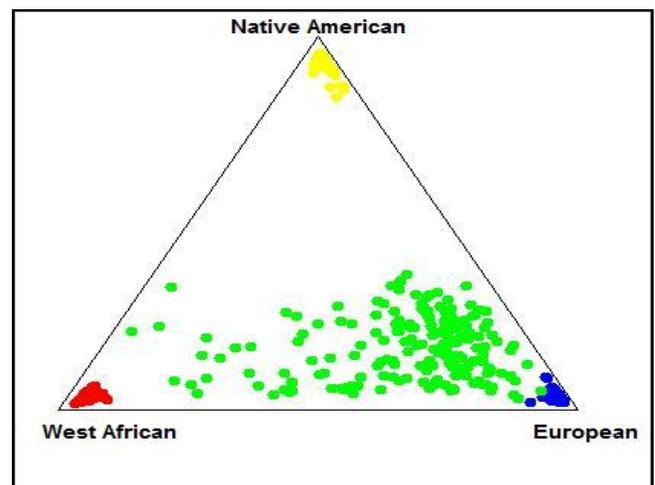
*Invited speaker Dr. Rick Kittles from
University of Illinois in Chicago*

In February 2012 the Collaborations and partnerships key function was able to organize in collaboration with the other key functions of the PRCTRC, the Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center (PRCCC) and the Deanship of Academic Affairs of the Medical Sciences Campus a workshop on Understanding Genetic Admixture and Its Implications for Complex Diseases. This workshop was attended by researchers and graduate students from the three PRCTRC institutions, University of Puerto Rico, Universidad del Caribe and Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences.

The workshop included a morning session in which the attendees had the opportunity to discuss with Dr. Rick Kittles, University of Illinois in Chicago and expert on the determination of admixture such topics as: Genetic Markers and Variation; Human Population Variation and finally Genetic Admixture: Methodological Issues. At the end of the morning session, Dr. Margarita Irizarry-Ramírez discussed the topic of Genetic Admixture: Practical Implications in Disease Studies. The afternoon session was a hands-on experience in the use of computer programs for

admixture applications and a discussion of the underlying statistical methodology used in admixture studies. Each participant had the opportunity to analyze a data set and determine the proportion of African, European and Asian ancestry for the individual in the set. Results were plotted and analyzed to calculate substructures within a population.

All participants completing a satisfaction survey prepared by the PRCTRC Evaluation key function personnel, indicated that they were “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the organization of the workshop, the information presented, presentation format, speaker expertise, hands-on experience, schedule length of the workshop and facilities. Similarly, all respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that this workshop was relevant, will be useful, fulfilled their expectations, and was one they will recommend to others.



Example of the plot



13TH RCMI INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

December 9-13, 2012 at
Sheraton Puerto Rico Hotel
200 Convention Boulevard
San Juan, Puerto Rico

- Call for abstracts due date is **May 18, 2012**. For more information regarding the symposium, please access the following link:
www.rcmiennial.org
- There will be limited funds to cover registration fees for PRCTRC Investigators. Please contact Talia Sanchez 787-759-0306 Ext. 241 or talia.sanchez@upr.edu

Up Coming

Activities

1

STATA: A Hands-On Introduction to Database Management and Basic Descriptive Statistics

When: May 24, 2012

1:00 to 4:00pm

Where: Janer Computer Center, Graduate School of Public Health, UPR-Medical Sciences Campus.

This workshop is already full

2

Capacity Building for HIV-HPV Clinical Trials Recruitment Among Minority Underserved Populations of Hispanic Origin

When: May 25, 2012

8:00am to 4:30pm

Where: Marriott Courtyard Isla Verde Beach Resort

Contact: Ms. Leticia Roman Torres
787- 772- 8300 Ext. 1208

3

A Proteomics Workshop

When: June 1, 2012

9:00am to 1:00pm

Where: Ponce School of Medicine & Health Sciences, Academic Building 1st Floor Room 101

Contact: 787-840-2575 Ext. 2191 or
hdelgado@psm.edu



Dr. José Rodríguez Orengo, Bioanalytical Laboratory Director of Fundación de Investigación (center) explains the analytical capabilities of the laboratory to: Francisco G. Bruno, Dr. Walter Frontera, Dr. Carlos Luciano, Dr. Margarita Irizarry-Ramírez, and Dr. Maribel Rodríguez-Torres.

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the schools of medicine in Puerto Rico, and makes feasible an increase in the research portfolio in this field,” said Dr. Rodríguez-Torres.

Dr. Frontera indicated that this partnership could “strengthen clinical research in Puerto Rico and serve as a magnet for bigger clinical trials” This partnership, he said, also gives prominence to the need for collaborations between academia and community organizations.

This MOU establishes that both entities will be full partners, will share and disseminate information to researchers, will link their web pages and will share data among researchers from the PRCTRC and FDI. Researchers from both entities may propose collaborative projects and apply for funding in a collaborative fashion. One of the main goals is to foster collaborative projects that will result in an increase in the amount of scientific publications, which address the elimination of Hispanics’ health problems.

Even before the formal agreement, FDI and PRCTRC researchers were collaborating in two research projects. The first one deals with Vitamin D levels in Puerto Rican adolescents and the second deals with equol, a compound that may promote breast cancer in Puerto Rico’s women.

Other activities that will be jointly organized will be education programs for the community, and grant writing.

RKS Conference



On April 18, 2012 the Regulatory Knowledge and Support key function hosted a conference titled: **“Guidelines for Setting up a Regulatory Binder”**. The invited speaker was Ms. Georgamaly Estronza, IRB Administrator from the UPR-Medical Sciences Campus. 40 participants from the UPR-Medical Sciences Campus, Universidad Central del Caribe and Ponce School of Medicine & Health Sciences attended or participated via videoconference.

The session focused on the importance of the regulatory binder and the documents that must be included in it. It was also discussed the purpose of the screening, enrollment and site visit logs among other things.

Overall the participants were highly satisfied with this activity. The conference slides were posted on our website for future references <http://prctrc.rcm.upr.edu/researchers/regulatory-knowledge-and-support/audits/regulatory-binder>

RTRN-DTCC

Seminars in Translational Research Methods

Cynthia M. Pérez, PhD
Key Function Leader

Mariely Nieves, MS
Key Function Coordinator

During the fall of 2011, the Research Design, Biostatistics and Clinical Research Ethics (DBE) key function, in collaboration with the Multidisciplinary & Career Development and the Collaborations & Partnerships key functions, hosted a two-day seminar entitled *Seminars in Translational Research Methods: Statistical Issues in Translational Research*. These seminars were offered by current staff of the RTRN-Data and Technology Coordinating Center (DTCC) Biostatistics Division: Dr. Jae Lee (DTCC Director of Biostatistics), Dr. Daniel Sarpong (Senior Biostatistician for the DTCC), and Dr. Jimmy Efirid (Senior Statistician for the DTCC). Dr. Lee, Dr. Sarpong and Dr. Efirid have 50 years of combined statistical experience, have led/coauthored over 160 peer-reviewed scientific articles, and are supporting various types of clinical studies from genetics to population-based epidemiology studies.

The seminars were directed to PRCTRC researchers as well as to epidemiologists and biostatisticians/statisticians from the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Universidad Central del Caribe (UCC) and Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences (PSM & HS). The morning sessions were presented to PRCTRC investigators and transmitted via live webcast to UCC and PSM & HS. These covered analytical

methods for translational research, design of effective data tables for publications, and introduction to genetic data analyses. The afternoon session included a seminar directed to epidemiologists and biostatisticians/statisticians about the theoretical basis and applications of the study design, measurement issues and analytical considerations in translational research. A full-day workshop in hierarchical linear modelling was also directed to epidemiologists and biostatisticians, with a particular focus on the application of SAS and SPSS for multilevel modelling.

A total of 32 participants reported overall satisfaction with the faculty expertise and schedule. Likewise, overall participants strongly agreed or agreed that this seminar series was relevant and will be useful for they professional

Meet the new staff

The Research Design, Biostatistics, Data Management and Clinical Research Ethics Key Function, welcomes our new epidemiologists/biostatisticians, **Katya Giovannetti** and **Mariel López**, to the PRCTRC. In collaboration with the Key Function leaders and coordinator, they will provide support to our researchers in the design, analysis and database management of their clinical and translational studies.



Mariel López

Katya Giovannetti

Katya is a graduate of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey where she received a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology. She furthered her education at the University of Pittsburgh-Graduate School of Public Health where she earned a Master of Science degree with a concentration in Epidemiology. She worked at the Magee-Women's Hospital & Magee-Women's Research Institute in Pittsburgh as a project coordinator and biostatistician where she assisted in the data analysis, recruitment, interviewing, and collection of biological samples from pregnant women receiving prenatal health care for a study on nutrition and the genetics of prematurity. More recently, she served as a data manager and researcher to develop a comprehensive database of all food and alcohol establishments in Pennsylvania to examine the association between food insecurity and alcohol availability with negative reproductive outcomes and violent crime rates.

Mariel is a graduate of the University of Puerto Rico Graduate School Public Health where she received a Master of Science with a concentration in Epidemiology. Mariel worked as an epidemiologist with the Maternal and Child Health Division of the Puerto Rico Department of Health where she conducted two studies and prepared the first guide for the Maternal Mortality Surveillance System for Puerto Rico. More recently, she worked at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta for four years where she served as a fellow at the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities and as a research fellow/epidemiologist at the Applied Epidemiology Fellowship Program at the Council of States and Territorial Epidemiologists. Her main project focused on a pilot project aimed at using developmental screening to improve children's health". She evaluated baseline information, coordinated existing resources, established collaborations, and analyzed data from the National Survey of Early Childhood Health.

They are both very excited in collaborating with our group of researchers in their clinical and translational investigations and feel honored to be part of the PRCTRC. We are fortunate to have these talented epidemiologists working with us this year. We say farewell to our previous research assistants, Marcos Felici and Myraida Morales, who collaborated with our Key Function over the past two years. We wish them well and look forward to seeing their careers develop in the future.

Welcome!