

Welcome Message from the Editors of *El Faro*, Sandra Oviedo Ramirez and Allyson Hughes.

Welcome to the Summer 2015 edition of *El Faro: La Voz de la Red*. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with current topics and research among the members of the National Hispanic Science Network (NHSN) and the Early Career Leadership Committee (ECLC). We also hope that you will use this newsletter to not only stay connected with current members of NHSN but also to make connections with new members and senior members.

include accomplishments of current NHSN members, the speed mentoring luncheon, the many well-deserving award winners, the expert led grant writing session, and new investigators panel. We also introduce new members to NHSN in the *New Members Spotlight* section.

We would like to offer a special thanks to this year's National Steering Committee which included Patricia E. Molina, M.D., Ph.D., Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, M.D., Ph.D., Margarita Alegría, Ph.D., James Anthony, Ph.D., Richard De La Garza, II, Ph.D., Diana Martínez, M.D., María Elena Medina-Mora, Ph.D., Guillermo Prado, Ph.D., Yonette F. Thomas, Ph.D., Avelardo Valdez, Ph.D., and to the Early Career Leadership co-chairs which include Yessenia Castro, Ph.D. and Miguel Ángel Cano, Ph.D. for another successful conference! We would also like to thank Betsy Giamo and the volunteers who helped with the planning and execution of this year's conference.

We hope that you are enjoying your summer and catching up on relaxation and work. Enjoy the issue!

Sincerely,

Allyson & Sandra



Our current issue highlights the 15th Annual National Hispanic Science Network conference that was held June 24, 2015 to June 26, 2015 at La Quinta Inn & Suites Riverwalk in San Antonio, TX.

If you attended the conference, we hope that you enjoyed yourself. We have no doubt that you left the conference feeling inspired and informed by the clinical research, the epidemiological research, and the use of animal models research regarding drugs of abuse and their implications. The conference allowed for us to focus on the NHSN's Mission Statement which states that "NHSN is dedicated to improving the health equity of Hispanics by increasing the amount, quality and dissemination of interdisciplinary translational research; and fostering the development and advancement of Hispanic scientists to promote future leaders."

For this edition we highlight the many exciting new projects that were presented at this year's conference. In addition, we also

Conference Highlights

Dr. Nora Volkow has served as the Director



of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) at the National Institutes of Health for over 12 years. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. Dr.

Volkow's work has been instrumental in demonstrating that drug addiction is a disease of the human brain. She was recently named one of Time Magazine's "Top 100 People Who Shape our World".

NHSN's opening plenary session featured Dr. Nora Volkow. She addressed NIDA's current progress, and the many challenges, and opportunities in drug abuse and addiction research. NIDA has proposed reorganization, including the appointment of NHSN member Dr. Carlos Blanco as director of NIDA's Division of Epidemiology, Services, and Prevention Research at NIH. The organization is determined to focus on achieving groundbreaking developmental research despite budget cuts. NIDA's goal is still to engage in a major brain initiative that will primarily focus on brain circuits and neural networks in order to understand how unique thoughts and functions are being generated.

Dr. Volkow's talk highlighted the importance of an upcoming project that centers on "precision medicine". Due to multiple advances in medical technology, personalized medicine is becoming a reality. "Precision medicine" will account for variations in a patient's genetic makeup, their environment, and lifestyle. Personalized medicine will be integrated with a new model of research with engaged participants who can access their data. This will pave the way for open, responsible patient information sharing with privacy practices still intact.

The importance of reproducibility and transparency of research findings was also discussed. This has been a long standing issue within the science research community but NIDA is now taking a stand and encouraging scientists to produce replicable work with transparent findings. Scientists and research organizations are encouraged to adopt more systematic review processes in the hopes of promoting best practice science and filtering out research findings that are not transparent or able to be replicated.

Lastly, it has still not been determined how the legalization of marijuana will affect a developing adolescent brain. NIDA is launching the adolescent brain cognitive developing national longitudinal study that will provide multifaceted answers to research questions that are decades in the making.



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

The Early Career Panel



Left to right: Antoniette Maldonado-Devincci, Ph.D., Karina Gattamorta, Ph.D., Catalina Lopez-Quintero, Ph.D., Jennifer Reingle, Ph.D., and Rodolfo Flores, B.A.

The New Investigators in Drug Abuse Research panel was held on Thursday, June 25th. The purpose of the early career panel is to highlight up and coming researchers (including graduate students, Ph.D.s, and post-docs) who are early in their careers. Four presenters were featured this year and the presentations were chaired by Jennifer Reingle, Ph.D.

The first presentation featured Antoniette Maldonado-Devincci, Ph.D., who is currently at Bowles Center for Alcohol Studies, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She presented her work on how chronic intermittent ethanol exposure and withdrawal alters allopregnanolone (3A,5A-THP) levels in glial cells in C57BL/6J mice.

The second presentation was by Rodolfo Flores, B.A., a second year graduate student

at the University of Texas at El Paso who is under the mentorship of Dr. Laura O'Dell. Rodolfo presented his work examining how estrogen promotes the rewarding effects of nicotine in female rats.

The third presentation featured Karina Gattamorta, Ph.D., a research assistant professor at the University of Miami, School of Nursing and Health Studies, who presented work examining the comorbidity of psychiatric and substance abuse disorders among Hispanic adolescence. Her presentation examined variables including the age of onset, rates of substance abuse, and stated that the role of gender was not well established in the literature and in her sample.

Lastly, Catalina Lopez-Quintero, Ph.D., a post-doctoral fellow in the department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at Michigan State University. She presented findings from an epidemiological study regarding estimated annual incidence rates for use of cannabis in the 21st century United States.

Grant Writing Highlights

Another highlight of this year's conference was the grant writing session presented by

Craig Field, Ph.D., an assistant professor for the department of Psychology at the



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

University of Texas at El Paso and Laura O'Dell, Ph.D., a professor in the department of Psychology at The University of Texas at El Paso. The last presenter was Guillermo Prado, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. Together these presenters are multiple million dollar grant awardees.

Dr. O'Dell provided tips regarding reviewing grants from a reviewer's perspective. She encourages applicants to view the reviewer as your advocate and to make sure to closely read the mission statement of the agency who you are submitting your grant to. Also, know who is on the reviewing board. According to Dr. O'Dell, some review boards include a lay person while others are made up strictly of MDs. There is a big difference between writing a grant for each of these types of people and it can greatly affect the outcome of your application. Moreover, if applicable, know and state what the "pay off" is for the clinical setting. Before your final submission, watch out for spelling errors, as these can be the "kiss of death." Furthermore, beware of using too many acronyms, too many references to other parts of the application (other pages). Lastly, if you are re-submitting a grant, make sure to address all of the reviewer comments.

Dr. Laura O'Dell's Tips on How to Get Funded

- Develop overarching hypotheses that are testable.
- Pictures/diagrams should be provided for difficult information.



- Publish papers to build your credibility in the key area you seek to establish as your "niche."
- End on strong note of reflection about mechanism.
- Ask many types of people to review your application before submitting.

Dr. Craig Field's Tips on How to Get Funded

- Know the difference between a program announcement vs request for applications, weigh your options and consider opportunity cost.
- Be careful what you ask for.
- Don't constantly reinvent yourself.
- Important aspects to consider when constructing your application include budget, sample size/type, and feasibility of completing the project in projected time frame as this may make or break your application.
- If possible, minimize the limitations in your proposals.
- Assess why you are putting off application for next submission cycle.



If you find yourself resubmitting, then here are some helpful tips from Dr.



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

Field. Make sure to allow for sufficient time to reread the summary statement (Dr. Field warns that you are going to hate the summary statement). Also, if you are confused by the feedback you received from reviewers, consider requesting a phone call from your program officer as they can decode your feedback from initial proposal. Once you are ready to start editing the document then be sure to rank all reviewer comments from major, moderate, to minor concern. Always be responsive to reviewer's comments and you must clearly address major limitations in your document's introduction. Dr. Field suggests using a review group to strengthen your writing. One of my favorite quotes from this session was when Dr. Field stated that, "You aren't writing a mystery novel."

Speed Mentoring



Every year NHSN presents speed mentoring at its annual conference. Speed mentoring allows mentees

(students, early career Ph.D.s) to meet with multiple mentors (largely experienced Ph.D.s) to discuss any questions or topics they bring with them to the mentorship. Following the mentorship there was a buffet lunch where mentors and mentees heard from Dr. Guillermo Prado about his career advice points.

Ten Helpful Tips for Early Career Scientists



Dr. Guillermo Prado is a Leonard M. Miller Professor of Public Health Sciences and the Chief of the Division of Prevention Science and Community Health at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine's Department of Public Health Sciences. Dr. Prado shared ten career advice points which



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

will assist early career scientists in being highly productive and successful scholars.

Here's the list:

10. Have tough skin
9. Listen to your mentors
8. Network and surround yourself with the very best people
7. Toss the 40 hour work week
6. Don't burn those bridges
5. Get plenty of feedback
4. Always remember why you do what you do
3. Learn to say "no"
2. Learn to delegate
1. Stay humble throughout the process

Presentation Spotlight



Dr. Marisela Agudelo is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Immunology at Florida International University who is currently funded by NIAAA, project number

R00AA021264. She has been a member of NHSN since 2012 and was a member of the 2015 NHSN planning subcommittee.

During her talk at Session A2: "Emerging Marijuana Use Research" held at this year's NHSN meeting in San Antonio, TX, she presented findings from her current NIAAA funded project on the epigenetic mechanisms of alcohol abuse and also some pilot study supported by the Institute of

Neuro-Immune Pharmacology at FIU on the effects of marijuana on histone modifications. Although recent studies have demonstrated that epigenetic mechanisms including DNA methylation and histone modifications play a major role in the development and manifestation of addictive behaviors, whether the immune-modulatory activity of alcohol and cannabinoids is mediated by epigenetic regulation has not been investigated yet. In addition, the effects of alcohol and marijuana on histone deacetylation in human immune cells are poorly understood since most of the reports have been on animal models and mostly focused on the central nervous system. Dr. Agudelo's work was performed *in vitro* with human monocyte-derived dendritic cells from controls (non-users), alcohol and marijuana users. Results show that class I histone deacetylases were significantly upregulated across the alcohol and marijuana groups with higher levels of expression shown in the alcohol abusing group. Overall, her findings show both alcohol and marijuana significantly modulated class I histone deacetylases and their enzymatic activity compare to the control group. For the first time, her findings contribute to a better understanding of the genetic histone deacetylase profiles during alcohol and marijuana use in humans, which may elucidate the molecular mechanisms that play a major role in the modulation of innate immune cell function during substance abuse and possibly explain the differential inflammatory responses observed during alcohol and marijuana abuse.



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

Members in the Spotlight



Congratulations to Carlos Blanco, MD, Ph.D., a long standing member of the National Hispanic Science Network, who will be leading NIDA's Division of Epidemiology,

Services, and Prevention Research at NIH. He began the position on June 15, 2015. At this year's conference he presented on his previous published work regarding the co-occurrence of substance use disorder and depression and their implications for treatment.



Congratulations to Alice Cepeda, Ph.D., on her recently awarded NIH R01 to study the long term health consequences of drug use and intimate partner violence

victimization among a vulnerable cohort of Mexican-American females recruited over 15 years ago affiliated with male gang members during their adolescence. Drs. Avelardo and Amaro and other NHSN members, are co-investigators on this project.

Please note: In the future, if you are interested in sharing your news regarding promotions, grants, publications, etc., we encourage you to please contact Allyson or Sandra.

National Awards for Excellence

Each year during the planning of the Annual Conference we solicit nominations for National Awards for Excellence in various categories. Categories recognize excellence in research across the spectrum of stage of career as well as excellence in mentoring and service provision. Please join us in congratulating the following recipients of the 2015 NHSN Annual Awards for Excellence:

Best Poster by a Young Investigator

Diana Sheehan, MPH



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

Excellence in Research by a Student
Kathryn Nowotny, Ph.D.



Excellence in Mentorship
Alice Cepeda, Ph.D.



Excellence in Research by a New Investigator
Kristine M. Molina, Ph.D.



Excellence in Research by a Senior Investigator
Richard De La Garza, Ph.D.



Excellence in Service by a Community Organization/Agency
TARZANA Treatment Centers Inc.



The call for nominations is typically released 8-12 weeks prior to the NHSN Conference. Please consider nominating yourself or those you work with for these awards next year!



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

New Member Spotlight

For this edition of the newsletter we have several new members to introduce. The first is Lourdes Guerrero, Ed.D., MSW. She is an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA.



1) Why did you decide to join the NHSN?

I wanted to join a community of like-minded researchers and find support for the work I do.

2) When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?

I've been involved in Chicano/Latino/immigrant/low income issues since I was an undergraduate at Cal. I've worked in various community settings and as a social worker, have always been aware of the need for holistic services for this population. Health is very connected with education, which is where I've spent most of my career, so I bring this perspective to my health research.

3) Briefly describe your current line of research.

I have been involved in pipeline and workforce development research, focused on increasing diversity in the biomedical sciences and culturally/linguistically

appropriate services. I'm currently working on substance use among adolescents, how educational environments can enhance prevention efforts and protective factors.

4) What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?

The dream is to have my research influence policy and practice. I don't believe I'm there yet.

5) What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?

The most important lesson I learned was to never quit and to let go. I learned that sometimes the path of least resistance doesn't mean being a push over.

6) What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?

All mentors have varying important qualities. I have yet to find one that has all of them. So I look for people that can support me in various way - academically, professionally, personally.

7) What advice would you give on how to handle stress?

Find something outside of work that you enjoy doing and do it! I handle my stress by running.



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

8) What is your cultural background and how did it influence your choice of career and/or research area?

I am a Chicana. All of my professional and personal activities are influenced by being a first-generation, college-going, and daughter of Mexican immigrants.

9) What do you do for fun?

I love watching my daughter play tennis.

Second, we would like to introduce Karla Llanes, B.A., who is a second year Doctoral student at the University of Texas at El Paso.



1) Why did you decide to join the NHSN?

Hispanic health disparities are problems that require an understanding as to why they occur. I decided to join so that I could address this problem by collaborating with researchers from diverse disciplines whose goals are to reduce Hispanic health disparities. Also, everyone brings their own background and expertise so it is interesting to become informed on areas of research outside of my field.

2) When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?

When I was an undergraduate at the University of Texas at El Paso I took courses in psychology that sparked my interest. During my junior year, I joined a lab where I was offered the opportunity to work on multiple studies on Hispanic health research. One study examined medication dosing error in Hispanic parents and another study examined communicating health information using ethnic comparisons. I have been conducting research using underrepresented samples since that time.

3) Briefly describe your current line of research.

The lab I work for conducts both applied and laboratory based research in areas of risk perception, risk communication, and risk-taking. We are working on multiple projects that examine the persuasiveness of anecdotal and statistical evidence on risk perception and risk-taking behavior, synergistic effects of alcohol and marijuana on driving, factors that predict marijuana use, and cognitive biases such as, the sunk-cost bias, and denominator neglect. My research interests focus on cognitive biases in decision-making that lead to maladaptive and dangerous behavior in individuals.

4) What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?

My long term goal is to become a professor and teach at a university setting while conducting research in areas of health communication, disease and drug use prevention, risk perception, maladaptive behavior, eating behavior, and other health



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

related concerns. Although I currently conduct research in health psychology, I would like to teach my own course after obtaining my masters degree.

5) What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?

Be helpful to others and don't be afraid to ask for help. We all have the goal to succeed in academia or research.

6) What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?

The most important quality I admire in my current mentor is his humbleness. I hope to find mentors who listen to their students and remain well-grounded.

7) What advice would you give on how to handle stress?

I'd recommend asking ourselves "what is causing us to feel stressed and what can we do about it"?

8) What is your cultural background and how did it influence your choice of career and/or research area?

I was born and raised in the border city of El Paso. My Hispanic background allowed me to be culturally sensitive to issues that underrepresented populations are faced with. My geographical location allows for a convenient sample to study these issues.

9) What do you do for fun?

I like conducting research, learning in general, traveling, and spending time with my family, friends, and dogs.

Last, we would like to introduce Rodolfo Flores, B.A., who is a first year Doctoral student at the University of Texas at El Paso.

1) Why did you decide to join the NHSN?

The reason I decided to join the NHSN is because it is a network that enables Hispanic scientists who are also interested in drug abuse research to connect with one another. I was also motivated to join based on the recommendation of my academic mentors who are part of NHSN. Altogether, I believe that by being a member of NHSN, I will be able to find meaningful connections and opportunities that will enhance my pre-doctoral training.



2) When and why did you become interested in Hispanic health research?

My interest on neuroscience and addiction research developed while I was an undergraduate at California State University Long Beach. It was there that I began to



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

engage in research under the mentorship of Dr. Arturo Zavala. Eventually, I completed my honors thesis on the long-term effects of early exposure to methylphenidate on cocaine and methamphetamine reward during adolescence in male and female rats. As an undergraduate, I also had the opportunity to join the laboratory of Dr. Laura E. O'Dell (now my graduate mentor) at the University of Texas at El Paso as part of a summer research experience. Under Dr. O'Dell's mentorship, I worked on a project that examined whether the increased nicotine self-administration in diabetic rats was mediated by insulin. Overall, working in a laboratory setting as an undergraduate stimulated my interest of neuroscience addiction research and motivated me to pursue graduate studies. In particular, I became intrigued with understanding why some populations are more vulnerable than others to drugs of abuse.

3) Briefly describe your current line of research.

I am currently involved in a project that examines the role of ovarian hormones in modulating the rewarding effects of nicotine in female rats. The ultimate goal of this work is to identify the underlying factors that promote tobacco use in women.

4) What is your ultimate dream in terms of your career? Have you already accomplished this?

At the moment, I do not have an ultimate dream for my career because research will always bestow new dreams into your life. However, in the future I would like to attain

a career in academia at an institution where I am able to conduct cutting edge research on the behavioral neuroscience of addiction. In particular, I would like to work closely with a diverse student body on research projects that will lead to peer-reviewed journal publications. As I have seen by observing my mentor, I would also like to be able to mentor graduate and undergraduate students who are in pursuit of a career in research and provide them with the opportunity to excel in research, which will enable them to meet their ultimate goals in life.

5) What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?

While I have certainly learned many important lessons during my first year as a graduate student, there is one lesson that I find particularly important, and that is to be proactive. In other words, as a graduate student I think it is important to go out and create your own events and opportunities. Whether you may want to learn a new method or an analysis, always take control over your goals and pursue them. Also, do not be afraid to seek help and do not wait or expect for someone to do the work for you.

6) What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?

I think the most important quality I look for in a mentor is whether she or he has the generosity to support you to become the person you want to become.



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

7) What advice would you give on how to handle stress?

One way to handle stress during graduate school is to not let go of your hobbies and the things that keep you happy outside your work. I personally exercise at the gym or take a walk at night around the campus with my wife. On occasions, I also turn to my long-term personal goal of learning how to play a guitar. As a final thought, I would also recommend to prevent stress when possible. For example, as a graduate student who is still taking classes, I try not to procrastinate on class assignments or study last minute for exams. In the end, I think finding a good balance between your personal life and work is the most appropriate way to handle stress.

8) What is your cultural background and how did it influence your choice of career and/or research area?

I was born in Mexico City, Mexico and moved to Los Angeles, California at the age of 10, where I lived until I finished college. My choice of career was mostly influenced by my high school experience. While in high school, I had the misfortune of losing friends due to drug abuse. I also noticed how most of my friends of Hispanic descent did not pursue a higher education. Thus, while in college, I also worked for the Boys and Girls Club of America, where I tutored and served as a role-model for college bound students of my former high school. Ultimately, I became interested in learning more about the issues on drug abuse, which motivated me to pursue a higher education with the hopes of

one day being able to inspire future generations of Hispanic students.

9) What do you do for fun?

During my free time, I enjoy spending time with my wife, whether it is going to the movies or a night event. Also, one of the fun activities I like to do in El Paso is going hiking in the Franklin Mountains. On my own, I like to listen to audio books and assemble model car kits. Lastly, when time permits, my wife and I truly enjoy visiting our family in Los Angeles, California.

Membership Dues

It is time to complete the payment for your NHSN membership for 2015 and 2016.

- Research Scientist Members (Membership Fee: \$100)
- Graduate Student Members (Membership Fee: \$50)

NHSN membership will ensure your continued access to the strongest scientific network of scientists, mentors, and collaborators with the common interest. It will provide discounted registration fees at the annual conference and eligibility for travel award requests. Membership dues should be paid as follows:

1. Please go to this site: www.LSUHealthFoundation.org
2. Click on "Donate now"



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

3. Or click on "[Make your gift online now!](#)"
4. On the secondary screen below where the amount is entered, there is a box called "Designation". In that drop down list, there's a fund "NHSN Membership" that you should select. This will direct the registration fee to fund 622016. Be sure to identify whom the fee is for although this says a donation. We will be able to send a receipt following confirmation identifying it as membership dues payment.
5. Please send an email with a copy of the donation notification to Betsy Giaimo at mgiaim@lsuhsc.edu once you have completed this process. This will allow the NHSN to check and verify your membership dues have made it to the correct fund and ensure that you are included in items sent to the membership.



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN

Pictures from the NHSN 2015 Conference



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: [National Hispanic Science Network](#)

Follow us on Twitter: [@theNHSN](#)



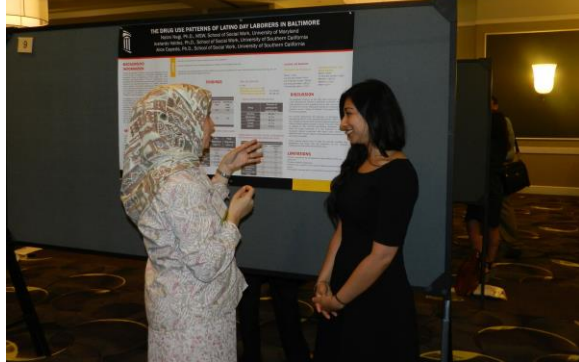
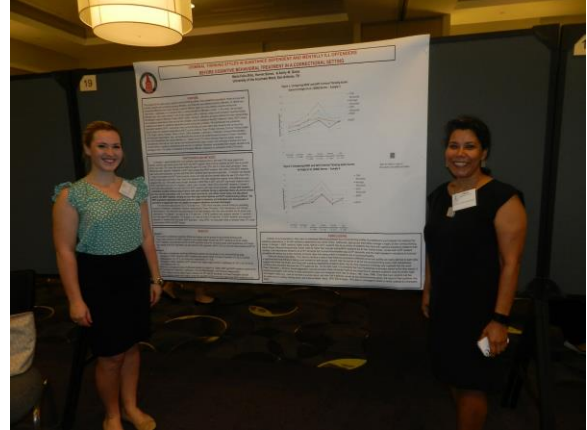
Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



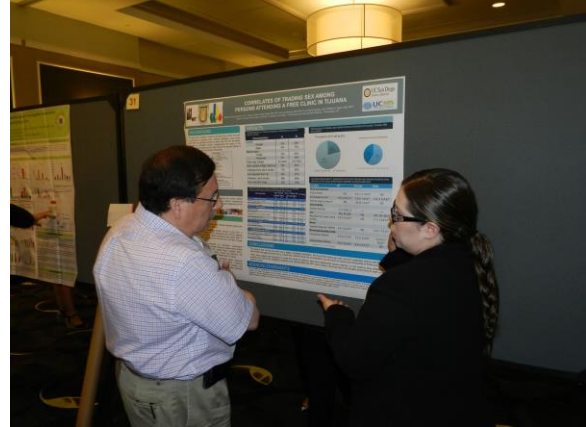
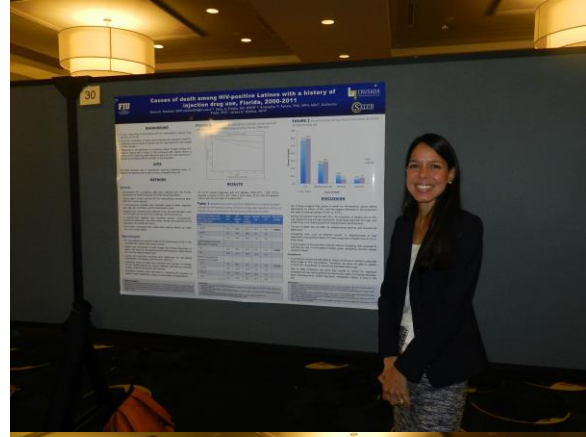
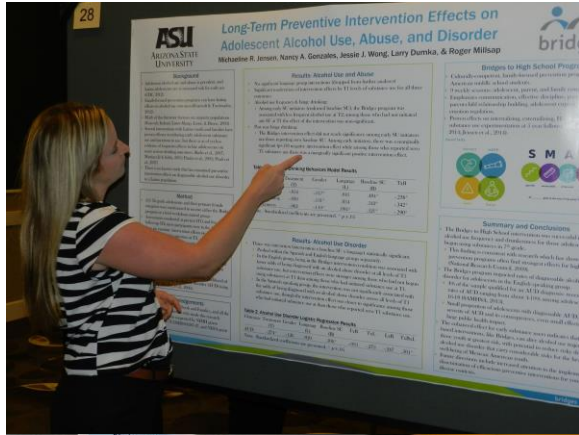
Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

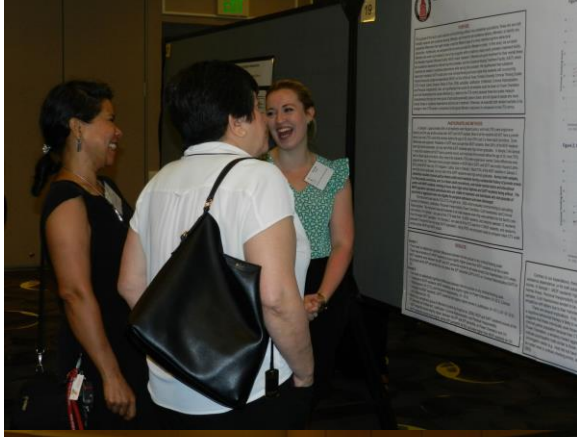
Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN





Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: [National Hispanic Science Network](#)

Follow us on Twitter: [@theNHSN](#)



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: [National Hispanic Science Network](#)

Follow us on Twitter: [@theNHSN](#)



Visit our Facebook page: [National Hispanic Science Network](#)



Follow us on Twitter: [@theNHSN](#)



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: National Hispanic Science Network

Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN



Visit our Facebook page: [National Hispanic Science Network](#)

Follow us on Twitter: [@theNHSN](#)