

EL

FARO



NATIONAL
HISPANIC
SCIENCE
NETWORK

JULY 2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01

Welcome Page

02

Accomplishments

03

**Early Career Investigator Column featuring:
Pricilla Martinez**

04

eIRTI

05

2022 Conference Updates

WELCOME

Welcome to the July 2022 Issue of El Faro

The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up-to-date with current topics and research amongst members of the National Hispanic Science Network (NHSN) and the Early Career Leadership Committee (ECLC).

This issue will feature the wonderful accomplishments of our ECLC members, including a feature from our very own Dr. Martinez, we celebrate our 2021 eIRTI fellows, and much more!

Also included in this issue are details related to our upcoming 2022 NHSN Conference. After TWO years, we will finally meet in-person again. We're excited to see everyone in Michigan.

On behalf of the El Faro committee, we thank you for your support and hope you enjoy reading about all the wonderful ECLC activities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Tara Bautista accepted a faculty position at Northern Arizona University (Dept. of Psychology), was awarded the 2022 Nadia Chaudria Rising Scholar Award, and got a paper accepted with Dr. Hortensia Amaro

Danielle Levitt accepted a faculty position at Texas Tech University, was elected Chair for GRS Alcohol-Induced End Organ Diseases for 2023, her talk/poster won 1st place in the Hot Topics in Muscle Physiology panel at Experimental Biology, and had a conference proceedings paper published

Anapaula Theman successfully defended her dissertation and was accepted to eIRTI 2022

Teresa Ramirez was named Poderosa in the DC area

Miguel de Leon was accepted into a neuroscience summer training program at the University of Chicago.

Adelis Cruz submitted her first ever grant and gave her first hour-long talk.

Tiffany Gonzalez accepted an offer from UTEP to join the Behavioral Neuroscience program

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Cho-Hee Shrader had 2 abstracts accepted to AIDS 2022 and 4 to SUNBELT (2 as presenter)

Tyler Nelson accepted a graduate school offer to attend the Interdepartmental Neuroscience Program at Yale University and submitted PhD program applications

Alyssa Lozano had 2 abstracts accepted to SPR

Veronika Espinoza published her first-first author manuscript and was also accepted to eIRTI 2022

Astrid Cardona got an internal fellowship to enhance her dissertation work.

Jorge Avila was selected to participate in SfN's Advocacy Training Program through ACNP Travel Award Program, had a publication published in October in the Journal of Psychopharmacology

Priscilla Martinez had a paper accepted

Dolores Vazquez Sanroman submitted her tenure & promotion package

Alejandra Fernandez submitted a K01 application to NIH/NHLBI

Sumeyra Sahbaz had a paper symposium accepted to SPR

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

EARLY CAREER INVESTIGATOR COLUMN FT. DR. PRISCILLA MARTINEZ

What factors have shaped your career path and helped you become the researcher you are today?

I think the most important factors that shaped my career path are that I worked for several years between undergraduate and graduate school, where I chose to go for graduate training, and the mentors who have supported me throughout my career.

I worked for 4 years as a research assistant and then project director for an HIV study at UCSF in the early 2000s after college, which spurred my interest in mental health and addiction among marginalized groups.

I then did all my graduate work at the University of Oslo in Norway, which limited my US network (read: no Americans, no NIH funding) but greatly expanded my educational experiences because I went to school with people from all over the world, and strongly supported my interest in global public health. Also, I get to say I'm a California-born Mexican-American who can speak Norwegian!

I worked for several years in Norway between my MPhil and Ph.D. as a research assistant and teaching English to Norwegian business people (yes, it was great!), and then did my Ph.D. I think being a project director and research assistant in different places in the world was extremely helpful in shaping the kind of researcher I am because I understand what it is like to be an RA and to work in teams with a stressed out PI in different environments.

Now as a stressed out PI myself, I know the importance of creating a supportive, productive, diverse, and fun team environment where we each make unique contributions and celebrate them. I think it makes the work more enjoyable and improves the science. And of course, my mentors have given me insight and support, and opportunities that I wouldn't have had otherwise. The most significant mentor was the PI of the HIV study at UCSF, who saw an ambitious, curious, first-generation queer Latina from a low-income family who had no idea what someone did with a PhD, and helped her find out by getting one herself.



Where do you see the field in addiction heading in 10, 20 years?

I wish my curandera crystal ball could tell me exactly where the addiction field is heading, but it's exhausted right now. My best guess would start with the observations that our methods are changing rapidly, for example, general population surveys aren't representative anymore and getting preposterously expensive and we need to adapt to that.

M Social media and non-probability web panels presents interesting opportunities for recruitment, but there are severe concerns and limitations, like inequities in internet access. So I think surveys about substance use will look very different in 10, 20 years, but I don't know what that will actually look like. I hope that the current work on the social determinants of addiction at the individual and population level will mean we see more research on structural interventions and their sustainability.

I hope my current, first R01 is wildly successful (so many papers, presentations, and would be great if the media and policymakers paid attention, too - dare to dream), I hope I get another R01, or two, I hope I do an outstanding job as a mentor to my first post-doc and K01 awardee, I hope to be a strong leader in my organization, and I hope to get a cat.

What do you hope to accomplish in the next 5 years?

How can mentors provide more research experiences and opportunities to young scientist?

Share power and experiences! I think mentors can support young scientists by "letting them in", so to speak. Even if it means they have to climb a steep learning curve and need support doing so, giving young scientists opportunities even before we think they are "ready" can give them the challenging experiences they need to move forward and thrive.

I would say stay firm but flexible. Firm in doing what you love, flexible in accepting opportunities when they come by. Sometimes opportunities will come forward that don't seem "perfect" or totally relevant to your area of expertise, but if it's something that piques your curiosity and is consistent with what you care about, go for it. I've been amazed at what I've learned in projects I thought were peripheral to my primary interests and how they've expanded my ability to do great science.

What advice would you give to graduate students and young investigators?

THE ENHANCED INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING INSTITUTE: 2021 FELLOWS

The goal of the eIRTI is to increase the number of independently funded Hispanic investigators that have gone underrepresented in biomedical, behavior and clinical substance abuse and addiction research. For 11 years the eIRTI has focus on three main aims: training, tri-mentoring and networking. Get to know the 2021 eIRTI fellows below.



Adelis Cruz, BS

Doctoral Student, Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences, Texas A&M University

Adelis works under the mentorship of Dr. Rachel Smith investigating the neurobiological mechanisms of compulsive drug seeking and relapse using rodent models of drug addiction. Her long-term career goal is to become an independent neuroscientist and to contribute to research focused on dysfunctional neural mechanisms associated with drug addiction.



Saul Alamilla, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychological Science, Kennesaw State University

Dr. Alamilla's research and scholarship address the social ecology of health and wellbeing among diverse, marginalized, and underrepresented groups. He is interested in the antecedents and consequences of multiculturalism, especially the implications for the health and wellbeing of diverse populations.



Alejandra Jacotte-Simancas, PhD

Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Physiology, Louisiana State University HSC

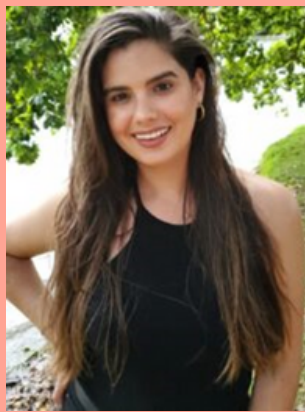
Dr. Jacotte's research is focused on elucidating the neurobiological mechanisms underlying post-TBI escalation of alcohol consumption and anxiety-like behavior using different approaches such as behavioral analysis, electrophysiology, circuit-based manipulations, and site-specific neuropharmacology.



Mercedes Hernandez, PhD

Assistant Professor, Steve Hicks School of Social Work, University of Texas at Austin.

Dr. Hernandez's research interests are informed by her extensive clinical practice experience in community mental health settings and are focused on addressing mental and behavioral health disparities among Latinx with an emphasis on help-seeking behaviors and early intervention outcomes.



Marilyn Horta, PhD

NIDA T32 Postdoctoral Fellow, Epidemiology, University of Florida.

Dr. Horta's research interests are in the neurobiological and psychosocial contributors to pain, and substance use across development, primarily in aging. Her long-term goal is to conduct rigorous, inclusive research that can inform the development of effective interventions to promote healthful aging.



Anel Jaramillo, PhD

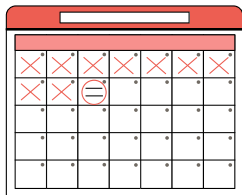
Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Molecular Physiology & Biophysics, Vanderbilt University

Dr. Jaramillo is currently a postdoctoral scholar at Vanderbilt University where she uses preclinical alcohol and stress models to investigate the neural mechanisms underlying anxiety and abstinence-induced affective disturbances. Outside of academia, Dr. Jaramillo enjoys exploring the Nashville music scene, gardening, and doing things that keep her dog active.

<http://www.irti.usc.org/>

For more information regarding eRTI contact: Erika Smith (erikague@usc.edu)

2022 NHSN CONFERENCE UPDATES



September 28-30, 2022

Registration opens May 1, 2022



Grand Rapids, MI

Hosted by Michigan State University
College of Human Medicine at the Secchia Center



Theme

Biological and Social Determinants of Drug Use: Addressing
Hispanic Health Inequities in the Age of COVID



Plenary Presentation:

Marietta Vazquez, MD

Professor of Pediatrics

Yale School of Medicine

Health Equity in the Times of COVID-19

**Be on the lookout for our
September
pre-conference issue with
additional conference
details and Nuestra Voz
featuring Dr. Ian Mendez**

El Faro Editors:

Valeria Garcia

UT El Paso

Daniela Franco

University of Maryland School of Medicine

Alejandra Jacotte-Simancas

LSU Health Sciences Center- New Orleans

Alejandra Fernandez

UTHealth School of Public Health