PACHE Spotlight: Yamilé Molina, Ph.D.

April 23, 2018 By National Cancer Institute

Inspired by this year's National Minority Health Month theme, Partnering for Health Equity, CRCHD is celebrating its Partnerships to Advance Cancer Health Equity (PACHE) trainees in a series of blog posts. We asked PACHE trainees and early-stage investigators to tell us about their work, partnerships, and mentors.

Yamilé Molina, PhD, is an assistant professor within the Community Health Sciences Division at the School of Public Health, Faculty Affiliate within the Center for Research on Women and Gender, and Academic Partner/Early-Stage Investigator for the University of Illinois–Chicago (UIC) Cancer Center's Office of Community Engaged Research and Implementation Science. In this position, Molina works to eliminate cancer disparities via developing, testing, and evaluating multilevel interventions, and supporting trainees from marginalized and resilient communities in cancer research.

Earlier in her career, CRCHD Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (CURE) funding was instrumental to her own development and training as a cancer researcher.

"CURE made my entry into cancer disparities research possible," said Molina. "After receiving my doctorate in animal behavior/evolutionary biopsychology, I actively sought this transition to support my family and other families disproportionately burdened by cancer."

Molina first entered CRCHD's CURE training pipeline through a postdoctoral CURE Diversity Research Supplement, under the mentorship of Beti Thompson, PhD, Shirley Beresford, PhD, and Rachel Ceballos, PhD.

"My first project in cancer disparities focused on

characterizing disparities in mammography screening and diagnostic care for Latinas and African-American women. This project enabled me to obtain a competitive cross-training fellowship on Drs. Richard Warnecke's and Elizabeth Calhoun's P50/CPHHD grant, where I developed strong partnerships with Chicago-based researchers and community partners as well as learned about which intervention strategies had the potential to reduce disparities."

"All of these research experiences ultimately led me to pursue actively a faculty position at UIC and to develop a successful program that compares intervention approaches' effects on cancer disparities."

When she first landed at UIC, Molina was a co-Research and Education Core Leader on the CRCHD PACHE-funded ChicagoCHEC, where she helped to train the next generation of diverse cancer disparities researchers. She assisted with development, implementation, and evaluation of the undergraduate summer program. She currently continues to serve as a mentor to PACHE trainees within her laboratory.

Today, Molina holds a CURE-funded K01, in which she is comparing different intervention approaches for screening to increase participant screening uptake and social network dissemination. She, along with her Multi-PIs, Karriem Watson, DHSc, MPH, MS, and Aditya Khanna, were also successfully awarded an R21 grant, in which they are working to characterize the unintended social network consequences of patient navigation for African-American breast cancer patients.

Molina has published and disseminated her work widely and been a passionate mentor to students and trainees since her transition into cancer health disparities in 2011. She has published 39

papers (21 as first author; 16 with trainees), and coauthored 38 conference presentations (17 as first author; 19 with trainees). She has been a primary research mentor for 31 trainees (4 high school students, 7 undergraduate students, 3 postbacs, and 12 graduate/medical students).

This post was originally published on April 23, 2018, by the National Cancer Institute. It is republished with permission.

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