

# heartbeat

SPRING 2023

University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies



**75 YEARS  
OF EXCELLENCE**





Happy National Nurses Month!

To all nurses around the globe,

Thank You

for your commitment and dedication

We are proud to celebrate  
75 Years of Excellence

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI  
SCHOOL of NURSING  
& HEALTH STUDIES



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SPRING 2023

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At the School of Nursing and Health Studies, we transform lives and health care through education, research, innovation, and service across the hemisphere.

Novel  
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WELCOME TO  
SPRING 2023  
Celebrating 75 Years of  
Excellence at SONHS



This year marks a School of Nursing and Health Studies milestone—the 75th anniversary of our educational beginnings! As a cohesive community of lifelong learners and health professionals devoted to equitable care and well-being for all, we are proud of our school's origins, committed to elevating its present success, and wholly invested in ensuring its thriving future.

As you will see throughout this special 75th anniversary edition of *Heartbeat*, SONHS is only improving with age. I know you will enjoy reading about how our wonderful faculty, students, alumni, and community of supporters are innovating new educational offerings, advancing transformative solutions and interventions for improved health outcomes, establishing novel transcultural exchanges around the world, and preparing countless premier professionals to transform health care across our hemisphere.

Our beautifully curated cover story on page 18 tracks the evolution of this special place. Due to space limitations, the photos curated give a glimpse into this incredible journey, but are not the whole story by any means. I am excited to share that a “75th Anniversary Memory Book” will be dedicated to celebrate the phenomenal trajectory of SONHS and all those who impacted it. Stay tuned!

On pages 12 and 16, two feature stories explore the bold strides we are making to revolutionize human trafficking awareness education, a pillar of our ongoing Ever Brighter campaign. On page 26, you can learn about groundbreaking research SONHS faculty are pioneering on another timely topic, LGBTQ mental health in the state of Florida.

Finally, please be on the lookout for news of upcoming activities commemorating 75 Years of Excellence at SONHS, such as a joint anniversary colloquium with the University of the West Indies in May and our Alumnus of Distinction and Homecoming festivities in November. This incredible journey—from 1948 to this very moment—would have been impossible without thousands of dedicated individuals like you uniting from all walks of life and every corner of the globe to create this special health care community day after day, decade after decade. You all can be proud of your part in making the exciting work of education, discovery, and innovation happening here at SONHS a reality for generations to come.

Cindy L. Munro  
Ph.D., R.N., A.N.P.-B.C., FA.A.N., FA.A.N.P., FA.A.S.  
Dean and Professor





# Endowment: Jorie Healthcare Partners

Significant gift will fuel research innovations at SONHS starting today

A generous gift from Midwest-based Jorie Healthcare Partners will establish The Jorie Healthcare Partners Biobehavioral Research Laboratory Endowed Fund at the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS). The endowment will fuel research innovations through an enhanced laboratory serving students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty—an investment designed to provide sustainable support for consequential scientific inquiry in biobehavioral health care.

The school's cutting-edge biobehavioral research laboratory, located in the M. Christine Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies on the Coral Gables campus, will be named The Jorie Healthcare Partners Biobehavioral Research Laboratory. The laboratory includes a cell culture room, microscopy room, and wet laboratory space where investigators test biomarkers, perform cell and bacterial cultures, study phenomena using preclinical models, work with human subjects, and much more. The laboratory is also equipped for conducting blood assays, determining gene expression, genotyping, and measuring telomere length, as well as assessing redox indicators and proteomics.

The Jorie Healthcare Partners endowment will provide a stable source of funds to support research activities, personnel, supplies, and equipment for the laboratory, as well as future renovations and current enhancements to an already-planned expansion project to increase the size of the 1,100-square-foot laboratory by 400 square feet. The inclusion of a generous “endowment accelerator” provides immediate access to current-use funds in order to extend work



taking place in the laboratory without delay. The gift will have an instantly positive impact while the endowment is being fulfilled.

“This extraordinary gift from Jorie Healthcare Partners will supercharge the capacity of the laboratory and strengthen the research experience for students, postdocs, and faculty



for decades to come,” says SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro. “The endowment ensures that the lab is forever outfitted with the equipment and resources to conduct groundbreaking, world-class scientific research that will drive advances in holistic, patient-centered health care strategies with the potential to generate profound and lasting change.”

Sal Lo, Jorie Health Care Partners CEO and co-founder, states, “We are excited to leverage our technology to transform and relieve administrative burden of patient

care by finding savings and improving the patient experience.”

This endowment and newly enhanced laboratory will become the driving force and nucleus of the SONHS Biobehavioral Technology Core, a key priority of the University of Miami's Ever Brighter campaign, ultimately leading to novel treatment options, new data to fuel innovations in the science of holistic, patient-centered care, and lasting improvements for public health. Complementing other leading-edge facilities at SONHS, the laboratory will attract top-flight faculty and postdoctoral fellows; facilitate research collaborations with renowned scholars, practitioners, and external partners in industry and academia; and support emergent lines of research in a wide range of critical areas.

“Jorie Healthcare Partners' tremendous generosity will benefit the lives of countless families, students, and health care professionals across Florida and the nation,” says Dean Munro. “We will educate the next generation of health care researchers, bridge existing gaps in knowledge, and promote collective wellness.

We also will find answers to pressing questions about patient health and translate those evidence-based answers into potentially lifesaving care improvements.”

Headquartered in Oak Brook, Illinois, Jorie Healthcare Partners is a health care technology industry leader with innovators and entrepreneurs pioneering work in robotic process automation, data analysis integration, revenue cycle management, business process re-engineering, and holistic practice management.

# New Grants Target Nursing Shortage

Two big awards will get more students into health workforce within a year

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects 194,500 openings for registered nurses annually through 2030. In the Sunshine State, that shortage is especially acute, with the Florida Hospital Association expecting a shortfall of 59,100 nurses in the workforce by 2035. In order to counter this gap, SONHS is pursuing new ways to build capacity for its prestigious Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (A.B.S.N.) degree, an intensive three-semester program for students with a four-year undergraduate degree in another field. Two substantial new grants are helping the school achieve its goal. “These new grants will empower us to address the state's nursing shortage by increasing our capacity to graduate highly qualified new nurses into the profession,” says SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro. “Moreover, because our A.B.S.N. graduates reflect South Florida's diversity, these programs will help us increase equity and diversity in the nursing profession while raising standards of care in multicultural service areas. The return on investment—for the students and our community—is high.”

## LINE Fund

A new program pioneered by SONHS and Jackson Health System (JHS), Miami's nonprofit academic medical system, kicked off this year with a site visit from Dean Munro and other nursing leaders from both institutions. SONHS was one of just seven Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida recognized with a 2023 Florida Department of Education Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund grant, a platform designed to drive innovative educational collaborations addressing the labor shortage.



With its \$75,000 LINE grant, SONHS teamed with perennial clinical partner JHS to create a Care Partners Dedicated Educational Unit (DEU), an expansion of the existing Care Partners Program, which places SONHS A.B.S.N. students in clinical rotations at JHS. Participating students, called “Care Partners,” will complete intensive, year-long clinical placements on the newly launched DEU, with nurse preceptors ensuring their acclimation to the profession. SONHS and JHS are also helping pay for the initiative, with JHS providing \$75,000 in matching funds.

Scholarship support is particularly critical for A.B.S.N. students, who often have exhausted financial aid eligibility with prior degrees; moreover, the program's compressed timeframe restricts their ability to finance their tuition by working. Since its 2013 inception, the A.B.S.N. program at SONHS has experienced a 70 percent increase in enrollment, according to University of Miami records. This rapid growth has taxed the school's ability to help students who meet demonstrated financial need.

“The new initiative will increase our enrollment capacity by 16 full-time A.B.S.N. students, each of whom will receive partial scholarships,” says Dr. Nichole Crenshaw, SONHS associate dean for undergraduate nursing

programs and associate professor, who is directing the DEU in conjunction with a clinical faculty coordinator from the hospital. “Participants will be ready to enter the workforce within a year and upon graduation will receive preferential consideration for nursing positions at JHS.”

## Hearst Scholarships

A \$250,000 grant from the Hearst Foundations will award \$10,000 scholarships to 25 highly qualified, full-time A.B.S.N. students from SONHS who demonstrate financial need. Hearst Foundations have long supported various areas at the U. That support includes the 1990 creation of a William Randolph Hearst Endowed Scholarship for 4-year nursing students and a subsequent naming gift for the William Randolph Hearst Operating Room in the School's Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™). “The generosity of the Hearst Foundations will significantly expand our ability to provide tuition assistance to an increasingly competitive and talented pool of applicants to our accelerated nursing program,” says Dean Munro. “As seasoned professionals making a career change, these students are driven, highly motivated, and altruistic. The vast majority find employment quickly, filling nursing positions in South Florida and beyond.”



# SONHS Research Update

## News from Dr. Hudson Santos, Associate Dean for Research

Images: Courtesy of Dr. Santos



Dr. Santos (center)



Dr. Harkness



Dr. Williams



Kathryn Gerber

I am happy to introduce this new space in *Heartbeat* magazine for highlighting notable achievements from faculty and student scholars and scientists. My own updates include representing SONHS at the 2022 **International Society of Nurses in Genetics (ISONG)** World Congress. I gave the closing keynote, “Multi-Omics and Mixed-Approaches Are Needed for Precision Health,” and received ISONG’s Founders Award for Excellence in Genomic Nursing Research, one of the highest forms of recognition one can receive from the international nursing genomics community. Our school was recognized at the 2023 **Southern Nursing Research Society (SNRS)** Conference, as well, when a paper I am senior author on—“Which roads lead to depression in Latinas? A network analysis of prenatal depressive symptoms, discrimination, acculturative stress, and low birth weight” (doi.org/10.1002/nur.22210)—was awarded the 2022 Paper of the Year by the SNRS official journal *Research in Nursing and Health*.

## Addressing HIV Disparities

**Dr. Audrey Harkness**, who joined SONHS as an assistant professor last June, continues making her mark in HIV prevention research. Most recently, she received a Mental Research Institute grant to culturally adapt an evidence-based relationship and dating skills

program for use with individual Latino sexual minority men (SMM). The adaptation, known as *Hombre a Hombre* (Man to Man), will be pilot-tested among Latino SMM, who are at greater risk for HIV and sexually transmitted infections relative to heterosexual men and, in some cases, to white SMM. Sexual minority stress and intersectional oppression as sexual minority men of color could be among the factors driving these disparities. “There have been no adapted programs for Latino SMM designed to be delivered to individuals and no culturally adapted relationship education programs that address the Latino SMM community’s unique cultural needs,” states Dr. Harkness. *Hombre a Hombre* could potentially address demonstrated disparities and enhance Latino SMM’s romantic and sexual relationships.

Dr. Harkness is also co-investigator on a federal Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) supplement for a proposal to develop a strategic alliance, SOMOS Alianza (San Juan Orlando Miami Organizational Strategic Alliance), aimed at addressing the sharp rise in HIV incidence among Latino Men Who Have Sex with Men (LMSM) in Florida and Puerto Rico. Both places are among seven jurisdictions accounting for 84 percent of the nation’s increase in HIV incidence from 2010 to 2014. To scale up HIV-prevention and treatment services for LMSM to two new jurisdictions, SOMOS Alianza will build on the

JUNTOS Referral Network for LMSM Dr. Harkness worked on previously. JUNTOS was among the community-engaged projects Dr. Harkness discussed during UM’s annual **HIV Symposium**, where she an invited speaker on a panel of rising-star Miami HIV investigators. **Dr. Renessa Williams**, assistant professor, also presented her poster “Employing the Use of a Participatory Photography Method to Explore Intersectional Stigma in Black Sexual Minority Men Living with HIV” at the HIV Symposium. Themed “Science Driving Strategy: Ending the HIV Epidemic,” the day-long event drew big names in HIV research, like Robert Gallo, best-known as co-discoverer of the virus.

## 3MT Competition

Outstanding Ph.D. candidate **Kathryn Gerber** was one of just nine UM students selected to vie in the Graduate School’s 2023 Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition. Her 180-second talk on “Traumatic brain injury during the rehabilitation stage,” was based on her dissertation, “Neuroinflammatory biomarkers, symptoms and functional outcomes in individuals who have sustained traumatic brain injury.” “Kathryn was a great representative of the school,” reports **Dr. Victoria Behar-Zusman**, director of the SONHS Ph.D. in Nursing Science program.

# Associate Dean Hired

## New post to amplify diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging

Prevention scientist Tatiana Perrino, Psy.D., was hired effective March 1 as the inaugural Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (AD-DEIB) and professor of clinical at the School of Nursing and Health Studies. Dr. Perrino joins SONHS from the Miller School of Medicine’s Department of Public Health Sciences, where she was a professor on the educator track.

As AD-DEIB, Dr. Perrino will collaborate with the SONHS community to envision, conceptualize, and promote an environment that embraces a broad and inclusive definition of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, as well as one that highly values the many racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural differences found within the SONHS community. Additionally, she will provide guidance and direction for understanding historical and current nondiscrimination laws, focusing on access and equity for program planning in higher education institutions. She will oversee efforts to address broad and specific DEIB issues of SONHS faculty, staff, and students as well.

“I am delighted to be joining SONHS,” says Dr. Perrino. “I very much look forward to partnering with everyone to continue advancing the school’s commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging. This is so valuable and important. Diverse perspectives and inclusive excellence enrich and strengthen everything we do: education, research, innovation, and service.”

Dean Cindy L. Munro founded a DEIB Advisory Committee in July 2020. “I am very grateful to our DEIB committee members for their work in facilitating this important new position for our



Dr. Perrino

school,” says Dean Munro. “Moreover, we have found in Tatiana Perrino an incredible person to lead us forward. She brings to this role what I can only describe as the perfect combination of community-based, clinical, scholarly, and leadership experience, not to mention a wealth of institutional knowledge from her two-plus decades at the U.”

Dr. Perrino, a licensed psychologist and member of the National Hispanic Science Network, was identified as the lead candidate following a nationwide search. Since joining the Miller School of Medicine in 2000, she has collaborated on several National Institutes of Health studies aimed at reducing health disparities and preventing public health problems such as drug use, HIV, obesity, and depression. Her current research and community work focus on preventing depression and related mental, emotional, and behavioral health risks among adolescents, especially Hispanic immigrant and socioeconomically at-risk youth.

At the University level, Dr. Perrino serves as Associate Provost for Faculty Development and as faculty liaison for the Atlantic Coast Conference Academic Leaders Network. From 2016 to 2021, she was associate dean for the Graduate School. An experienced educator, she co-developed and directed the Graduate School’s Teaching Academy. Her courses have covered applied public health, health education and behavior, determinants of health and disparities across the lifespan, and other subject matter.

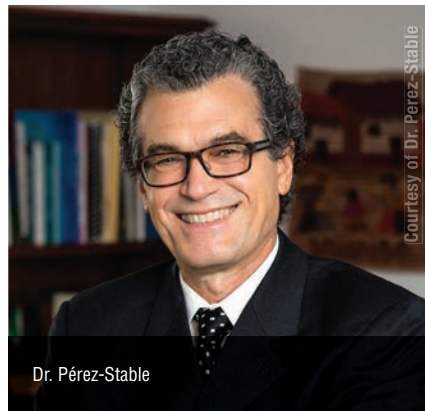
In 2023, Dr. Perrino received the Faculty Senate’s Outstanding Teaching Award for her graduate-level teaching record, and in 2022 was honored by the Public Health Student Association with its Department of Public Health Sciences Faculty of the Year Award. She completed a National Institute of Drug Abuse-funded postdoctoral research fellowship on adolescent drug abuse prevention in 2000. Dr. Perrino is a three-time graduate of Rutgers University in New Jersey, having earned her bachelor’s degree in psychology, and master’s and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology there.



# Spring Lecture Series Highlights

## Exploring minority health, celebrating Black History Month

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, M.D., presented “How Science Promotes Health Equity by Decreasing Disparities,” a virtual installment of the SONHS Spring Lecture Series in February. The director of the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) explained that telemedicine access, community engagement during public health crises, and efforts to address social determinants of health factors can impact health disparities. He also detailed NIMHD research priorities aimed at promoting health equity: implementing multilevel interventions, developing clinician-patient communication and trust, using structural change to modify behaviors, and identifying mechanisms such as biological pathways, the environment, and the health system. “It’s increasingly important to focus on intersectionality. Socioeconomic status, and race and



ethnicity as a social construct are the two pillars, and everything else rotates around it,” said Dr. Pérez-Stable, who earned his chemistry and medical degrees from the University of Miami.

COVID-19 exacerbated long-standing disparities in minority communities nationwide, he added. Structural racism and economic barriers like “redlining”

certain neighborhoods ensured some groups were left behind, with mounting effects on their health, livelihood, life expectancy, and generational wealth. “It’s like you were going to play Monopoly, but I said, ‘no, you can’t play yet, you have to wait,’” Dr. Pérez-Stable explained. “Then an hour into the game, after everyone’s already bought property and maybe even built houses and hotels, I say, ‘oh, now you can join.’ What kind of opportunity do you have with that?” At a watch party, graduate students and faculty had the chance to interact with Dr. Pérez-Stable about their own research interests. “Diversity of the workforce should be a priority,” he told them, adding that NIMHD offers opportunities such as its K award program and Summer Health Disparities Research Institute to increase the number of NIH-funded minority scientists.

## On Risk and Resilience

Last year, Dr. Cheryl Woods Giscombé purchased 42.5 acres in North Carolina that had belonged to her great-grandmother. She was captivated by a beautiful tree on the land. “It reminded me of what I study, which is how to resolve stress in a culturally relevant way through mindfulness,” she said during her February lecture at SONHS. “Mindfulness and self-compassion may be particularly effective to help African-American women and other groups who experience disproportionately high rates of chronic illness—particularly chronic illness that’s related to contextually relevant stressors.” Woods Giscombé, Ph.D., R.N., P.M.H.N.P.-B.C., F.A.A.N., a Distinguished Professor



Dr. Woods Giscombé (center) with Dr. Santos and Dean Munro at SONHS in February

at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing, shared insights from her important disparities-related research, including the African American Women’s Health Project, the Superwoman Schema Conceptual Framework, the We Can Prevent Diabetes mindfulness-based intervention study, and the Harmony study, a culturally relevant

stress management intervention for African-American women at high risk for cardiometabolic conditions. Harmony study participants, she noted, “wanted us to incorporate strategies to help them overcome the guilt of putting themselves first.” A reception honoring Black History Month followed Woods Giscombé’s presentation.

# Nurse Anesthesia Grads Achieve 100% Pass Rate

## Student prevails against all odds to realize her dream

December 2022 graduates of the highly ranked B.S.N.-to-D.N.P. anesthesia track at SONHS are celebrating a newsworthy achievement: a 100 percent first-time pass rate on the National Board of Certification and Recertification for Nurse Anesthetists (NBCRNA) National Certification Examination, the credentialing exam for Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs).

“As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, the Class of ’22 faced unforeseen challenges,” says Greta Mitzova-Vladinov, SONHS associate professor of clinical and director of the Nurse Anesthesia Program. “Still, they kept up with their didactic and clinical teachings thanks to our faculty’s innovative teaching and engagement strategies.”

For Catalina Majilton, D.N.P. ’22, COVID-related hardships were only the beginning. The single mom of two special needs kids knew completing the demanding three-year program would be grueling. With retinitis pigmentosa and no peripheral vision, her adolescent son, who is also on the autism spectrum, can’t drive a car or see at night. Her daughter, who has Zellweger spectrum disorder, is deaf, legally blind, and requires total care.

Majilton sat down with her son and laid out the challenges. They’d have to sacrifice—downsize to a smaller apartment, live on a reduced income.

“He said, ‘Mom, is this your dream? Then go for it!’” recalls Majilton. “He was my biggest supporter.”

The family had almost made it to the finish line when Majilton’s mother was hospitalized with COVID-19, and Majilton suddenly found herself with no one to help care for her daughter.



From left, Dr. Hooshmand, Dr. Majilton, and Dean Munro

“I was missing classes, failing my regional anesthesia course,” she says. “I thought about dropping out of the program.” Ultimately, though, she reached out for help, and the SONHS community quickly rallied in support.

“Dr. Mary Hooshmand helped me navigate the benefits system and qualify for a home health aide,” says Majilton. “My professors guided me in the right direction—how to study, what books to use—and my classmates organized an online study group. I studied day and night, and I passed my final and my oral board exams, too!”

“Making it through the program isn’t easy even under the best of circumstances,” observes Dr. Hooshmand, associate dean for Graduate Clinical Programs, “but we have our students’ backs and make sure they have the resources they need to succeed.”

Her dream of becoming a doctorally prepared nurse anesthetist now realized, Dr. Majilton reports that she has accepted a clinical position as a CRNA at Stanford Hospital and relocated to California with her mother and daughter. Meanwhile her son—who graduated from high school the same year his mom earned her D.N.P.—continues his studies at the University of Central Florida.

“It’s a happy ending!” she says. “My professors always challenged me to be the best I could be. By the end, I was a different person who had grown as a human being and professional. I can’t thank them enough.”

Reflecting on her own journey, Dr. Majilton encourages anyone thinking about taking that next step to do it. “Don’t be afraid. There’s always a way,” she says. “Once you have a dream, find the right people to support you, and nothing can hold you back.”



## Conference: Critical Care in Chile

Carmen Presti, SONHS associate professor of clinical, spent Thanksgiving as a presenter at the 40th Congreso Chileno de Medicina Intensiva (Chilean Congress for Critical Care Medicine), hosted by Sociedad Chilena de Medicina Intensiva (SOCHIMI). SONHS alumnus Cristobal Padilla, Ph.D. '21, a Chilean nurse scientist, connected conference organizers with her. "I was honored to be among the group chosen to speak," says Dr. Presti, an experienced cardiovascular intensive care unit (ICU) nurse practitioner (NP) at Miami's Jackson Memorial Hospital. "There were a lot of really amazing international speakers." Her three talks addressed the nurse practitioner's role in the ICU, the care of patients on ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenation), and novel strategies for hemodynamic monitoring. "The nurses were really eager to learn from us," she recounts. In addition, Dr. Presti contributed to an interdisciplinary panel discussing the pros and cons of integrating advanced practice



Dr. Presti in Chile, at center wearing blazer; Dr. Padilla is pictured far left.

nurses into the ICU in Chile, where the advanced practice role is just being established. "It really made me appreciate how formalized our nurse practitioner role is here in the States," she says. "What Chilean nurses are missing to expand their role is that research piece that validates how their additional training improves outcomes. That is going to change as more Ph.D. nurses from Chile contribute to the

literature." Dr. Presti also presented at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC) on the NP role. SONHS has been assisting that institution's historic efforts to graduate Latin America's first official NPs. Last year, SONHS associate professor Juan M. González taught advanced pathophysiology to the inaugural oncology NP cohort.

## Study Abroad Is Back!

COVID-19 threw a wrench into Sydney Stropes' plans to study abroad, so when SONHS resumed study abroad over winter break with an intensive transcultural nursing elective in Madrid, she was quick to opt in. "The group of 20 of us got to have the immensely unique and special opportunity to work within and observe the Spanish health care system," she says.



was in the right profession," she says. "We spend a lot of time focusing on the books, but it is a completely different experience seeing it right before your eyes. It was truly such an incredible experience for me."

Associate Dean and Professor Johis Ortega led Global Health: Transcultural Nursing (NUR485) from January 2 to 15. "Students are very excited our school has reinitiated its enriching

study abroad programs," he says. The 20 senior B.S.N. students from SONHS were guests of Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, where they attended lectures and anatomy lab. Clinicals took place at Hospital Universitario del Sureste and Hospital Universitario Quirónsalud Madrid. "Since we had the opportunity to do a lot of clinical rotations in so many different units while there, I saw a lot of procedures and gained a lot of experience I wouldn't have during a typical rotation in Miami," said participant Alison Skubik.

Stropes is also grateful for the opportunity. Cultural experiences "are very important in creating a well-rounded person, especially a nurse," she concludes. "Getting to see how other nurses operate and navigate their health care system was really fascinating. I certainly found myself learning lots from them that I plan to implement in my own practice."

## Public Health Reaccreditation Efforts Underway

The Bachelor of Science in Public Health program at the School of Nursing and Health Studies—Florida's only standalone baccalaureate public health program accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health—is seeking to extend the council's important stamp of approval for seven years. CEPH accreditation is a significant distinction, providing assurance that the school's B.S.P.H. meets established standards and that its curriculum imparts the necessary skills.

"It is paramount for any programs of public health, be it bachelor's or masters or doctoral, to be accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health because this is the national accreditation agency," says SONHS Associate Dean for Health Studies Dr. Arsham Alamian. "It speaks to the quality of the program, the quality of education students receive. The expectation is that we'll do well."

CEPH, an independent agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, first accredited the program in 2018. That five-year accreditation is due to expire July 1. "Accredited



programs are bound by a set of competencies and domains in the public health major," says Dr. Alamian. "These have to be reviewed at different levels by different reviewers from the practice side and by academia."

As part of the rigorous evaluation, multiple standards, including study areas, faculty engagement, and student outcomes—the percentage achieving graduate school placement or employment after completing

their degree—are examined. So far, SONHS has submitted an extensive self-study report and undergone a preliminary review. On-site interviews with administration officials and faculty took place at the end of February. The reviewers' complete report gets submitted to the CEPH board. School leadership can review and respond to that report before CEPH's final reaccreditation vote this summer.

## First-in-Florida Degrees Announced

SONHS and Miami Herbert Business School joined forces to create the Master of Science in Leadership (M.S.L.) / Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) joint degree program designed to equip early- and mid-career nurse leaders with greater fluency in key health sector management principles including negotiation expertise, marketing, health care finance, ethics, practice improvement, health policy, human resources, technology, and more. The first M.S.L./D.N.P. cohort of Florida-licensed registered nurses started this past January, Spring 2023. "The program is the only one of its kind in Florida and

among the first in the nation," says Dr. Mary Hooshmand, associate dean for Graduate Clinical Programs at SONHS.

The same pioneering claim can be made about a new joint degree offering from SONHS and the Miller School of Medicine's Department of Public Health Sciences. The first cohort for the 4+1 B.S.H.S./M.P.H. and 4+1 B.S.H.S./M.S.P.H. will begin Fall 2023, says Dr. Arsham Alamian, associate dean for Health Studies at SONHS. "Academically qualified juniors or sophomores majoring in health science at SONHS now have

the unique opportunity to complete both their bachelor's and master's degrees in five years," says Dr. Alamian. "I encourage students interested in our health science program to consider this opportunity. Pursuing a medical career requires a well-rounded, multifaceted understanding of public health and its affiliated concerns." A similar 4+1 degree option for SONHS public health students has been very successful.

Visit <http://sonhs.miami.edu/msl-dnp> and <https://bshs.sonhs.miami.edu>.



# Invisible No More

SONHS puts human trafficking front of mind for clinicians in the region, an epicenter for this global health crisis

By Robin Shear

At 14, “Melissa” was abducted and forced into sex trafficking. “I got angry with God,” she said on video, recalling her lowest point before a local nonprofit helped her escape. “I told [God], that’s it. I can’t survive this anymore. I was going to commit suicide...Most of the girls in there don’t think they could get out.”

Tens of millions of human trafficking victims, from young to elderly, exist among us, forced to stay silent and invisible—blend in, shut up, or disappear forever. In the U.S., Florida, California, and Texas are the top three states impacted, with South Florida at the epicenter of the crisis statewide.

“Despite this global epidemic, we are not educating our providers to recognize who they see in their practices,” said Dr. Deborah Salani. It is “very, very alarming,” she added, that 64 percent of trafficked individuals are seen by a health care provider while captive without being identified as such on examination—despite often-glaring “red flags” signaling the particularly brutal brand of long-term trauma and neglect they experience.





Dr. Salani



Dr. Valdes

This was the stark subject of a Beta Tau educational presentation made by Dr. Salani and her colleague Dr. Beatriz Valdes, both associate professors of clinical at the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), during Human Trafficking Awareness Month in January.

The title of their lecture, “Do You See What I See? Recognizing Human Trafficking,” is also the name of the evidence-based educational curriculum—a powerful hybrid of simulation and classroom instruction—the two first piloted at the Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™) in 2019.

“If we could educate more health care providers about this topic, more lives would be saved,” said Dr. Salani.

Education is key in helping health care providers become more confident, knowledgeable, and adept at identifying and assisting patients who may be human trafficking victims, according to scholarly projects conducted by two recent SONHS doctoral nursing students (see page 16).

To that end, over 600 nursing students in a variety of degree programs at SONHS have completed the “Recognizing Human Trafficking” course since its official launch in Spring 2021. The simulation portion of the course requires students to engage unknowingly with a trauma-informed Standardized Patient (SP) portraying a potential trafficking victim. Simulation educators Michelle Arrojo, D.N.P. '18, and Amauri Quintana,

D.N.P. '20, run the scenarios that immerse students in complex encounters with varying indicators, challenges, and symptomatology.

“The overall response has been excellent,” said Dr. Arrojo. “The students appreciate having the professional patients. They say it makes it more real.”

Dr. Valdes agreed. “Some students are so into it that they walk out of the room to call 9-1-1,” she said. “They forget they are in a simulation.”

At least two alumni spoke up during the Q&A portion of the lecture to say that what they learned in the course helped them identify a human trafficking victim during a subsequent clinical encounter.

“The simulation and accompanying curriculum ensures that when our students are exposed to an event like this in the clinical arena, it won’t be their first time,” said Dr. Quintana. “Many say they now feel more comfortable in what to do if they suspect someone is being trafficked or exploited.”

Teaching providers to identify and responsibly assist human trafficking victims in culturally appropriate ways that don’t retraumatize or endanger them is part of a concerted mission under way at SONHS, led by Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro, to make evidence-based tools and resources available to as many area health care professionals as possible.

Dean Munro has championed this curriculum from the beginning, making human trafficking awareness a pillar of the school’s goals for Ever Brighter: The Campaign for Our Next Century. Her support enabled Drs. Salani and Valdes to hire the 10 SPs they needed to enact emergency department patient scenarios addressing the sex, labor, and domestic servitude aspects of human trafficking.

“It’s not something you can read about,” said Dean Munro. “You have to practice it. Recognizing human trafficking should be a skill set just like the one we have when we see someone collapse. When that happens, we know how to perform CPR. We roll right into action.”

The Dean’s vision and blueprint includes establishing the Academic Center for Human Trafficking Education and Prevention at SONHS. The center will provide a permanent incubator from which faculty and students can continue developing, disseminating, and scaling up evidence-based curricula and research to national and international levels.

Critical support to date has come from The Harcourt M. and Virginia W. Sylvester Foundation, Maria G. Lamas, Heidi Schaeffer, M.D. '98, and the UM Citizens Board, among others.

The generosity of the Harcourt M. and Virginia W. Sylvester Foundation, for example, will enable SONHS to significantly expand its efforts over the next two years to educate frontline health care professionals, collaborate

with major hospital systems such as UHealth and Jackson Health System, engage a consultant, form an advisory board, and establish reproduceable resources for the local, national, and international community.

Lamas’s support helped create The Maria G. Lamas Featured Speaker Series for Human Trafficking Education and Prevention Endowment. Nurse practitioner Jessica Peck, a nationally recognized anti-human trafficking advocate and clinical professor at Baylor University in Texas, was the inaugural presenter for the series.

threatened with harm to their families, and forced to work in a health system without anyone outside the trafficking ring aware of their predicament.

Statistics show that a majority of victims, in fact, are not getting help to escape trafficking when they visit the health care system. “These are difficult patients when they come in. They have learned how to survive,” she said. “Raising awareness but not equipping nurses is just creating moral distress. We need to make sure systems are in place to help nurses respond. Nurses are the greatest health profession poised

jaw is still on the floor. They can really provide this curriculum quickly and efficiently. I’m excited to see what’s going to happen going forward from here.”

Drs. Salani and Valdes are equally eager to build the momentum SONHS has going. “Our goal is really getting out there and educating more providers to pick up the signs to recognize these individuals in clinical practice,” said Dr. Salani. In addition to nurses, they have begun to educate public health students, social workers, and medical students, among others. They now offer virtual simulations,



“Human trafficking is one of the most egregious human rights violations there is,” said Dr. Peck during her November address. “This is happening in your back yard, in my back yard, all the time, all around us.”

Emphasizing how shockingly commonplace the problem is, she said, “Sadly, it is easier to order a person than a pizza on the Internet.”

Even health providers are not immune from being victimized. Dr. Peck shared the story of a group of nurses from the Philippines lured to another country with promise of work then abused, stripped of immigration papers,

for prevention—that’s what we do,” she continued. “But we have to be organized as a profession.”

To help SONHS continue leading the way, Dr. Peck is sharing her expertise as a consultant and working with Dean Munro to assemble an advisory board. “The University of Miami has the ability to be an international leader in simulation-based learning,” Dr. Peck said. “What Dean Munro has proposed here with simulation is very innovative, immersive, and much more impactful for long-term behavioral change.”

Mentioning her tour of S.H.A.R.E.™ earlier in the day, Dr. Peck added, “My

too. “We train as many people as we can,” she said. “We want that number of unidentified trafficking victims to go down.”

*If you need help or suspect a case of human trafficking, call or share the Stop Human Trafficking hotline at 1-888-373-7888.*



# Identifying Human Trafficking

## D.N.P. students put scholarship into practice

By Carlos Harrison, Robin Shear, and Yolanda Mancilla

Working as an emergency department nurse early in her 20-year career, Aileen Alvarez, D.N.P. '22, saw firsthand the challenge of dealing with suspected human trafficking. Too often, she felt, its victims turned up in emergency departments (EDs) with acute problems but were never referred to authorities who could help them.

The problem is, like any disease, trafficking can only be identified if health officials can recognize the symptoms. "There's a significant need, so I feel passionately about trying to do something to make a change," says Alvarez.

The mother of four was able to do that last fall as she earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) at the School of Nursing and Health Studies while working full-time as an adult-gerontology primary care nurse practitioner. Collaborating with SONHS faculty members Deborah Salani and Beatriz Valdes for her third-semester quality improvement project, "Implementation of clinical guidelines, screening, and referral program," Alvarez interviewed hospital staff in Miami-Dade and Broward County hospitals to see if any had an established screening tool for human trafficking.

"It was somewhat alarming to find out that most places don't screen for human trafficking," says Alvarez, who graduated this past December. Especially, she continues, because "Florida ranks number three in the country for human trafficking and Miami-Dade has the highest reports per county."

Lack of screening guidelines is not unique to South Florida. "In our literature reviews, we found there's not really an established tool nationwide," she adds. "There are very few vetted tools."

Alvarez went beyond analyzing the problem. EDs, she notes, may frequently be the first, and perhaps



only, point of contact with authorities. She identified four objectives: Increase health care provider (HCP) knowledge on human trafficking (HP) and assessment, increase HCP assessment skills related to identifying HT victims, increase HT screening by implementing a screening tool as part of the electronic health record (HER), HT identification pre- and post-screening tool implementation. She then arranged visits to local emergency departments to teach nurses ways to spot potential human trafficking victims.

"Serious things they [emergency personnel] see on a frequent basis which are red-flagged are things related to the sexual organs," she says. "Frequent UTIs [urinary tract infections], any type of sexually transmitted infection or disease, pregnancy. Those are the things that, for the most part, ED providers are seeing. Also things that are going to impair their function, their performance. There's a car accident, there's anything of that nature, where there is no choice but to bring them in."

She went further still, creating a "badge buddy," a card in a plastic

sleeve nurses can hang behind their badges for easy reference. The card contains the nationally accepted Rapid Appraisal for Trafficking, or RAFT, screening tool. "It's only four questions they had to ask," says Alvarez. In scholarly presentations to peers and providers, she offered actions for health professionals suspecting human trafficking to take: immediately contact ER Social worker, interview patient alone, obtain an interpreter, complete screening and health history.

Now she is working on publishing the article she wrote about her project's findings. Significantly, she showed that educational intervention increased health care provider knowledge and self-reported confidence from health care providers in human trafficking identification and treatment and that establishing protocols and procedures further enhances the impact of anti-trafficking efforts.

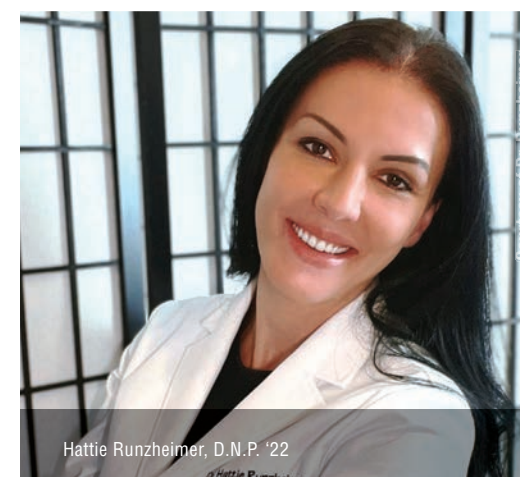
"We need more standards for mandatory screening for human trafficking, in the same way we screen for depression and domestic violence," says Alvarez. "In general, I just would

love nurses to feel more comfortable having those difficult conversations with patients."

Hattie Runzheimer, M.S.N. '19, D.N.P. '22, an acute care and psychiatric nurse practitioner, also elected to aim her scholarly project at this clinical practice problem with her SONHS faculty mentor Dr. Deborah Salani. "Human trafficking (HT) was on the rise during COVID," she says. "I chose this project because it was compelling, after having talked about it with Dr. Salani for a year."

Out of almost 100 health care sites interviewed, Runzheimer found just one had a human trafficking screening protocol in place. She developed a PowerPoint presentation designed to teach nurses to better identify human trafficking victims. She also sought to introduce an evidence-based assessment tool. She then initiated the training phase of the project with ED nurses at Jackson Memorial Hospital. June Ellis, the Associate Chief Nursing Officer of JMH's Emergency Department and Critical Care Unit, sent Runzheimer's PowerPoint training to all ED nurses with the survey linked to it. A total of 23 nurses completed the training, as well as pre- and post-test surveys.

Runzheimer concluded that there is need for standardization of HT training in the clinical setting and need for improved collaboration with community partners and key stakeholders. "Knowledge and confidence go hand in hand—to know the resources out there and be able to refer to a specialized clinic," she says. Local specialized resources for referring patients suspected of being trafficked include THRIVE Clinic at UHealth, led by SONHS alumna JoNell Efantis Potter, M.S.N. '87, Ph.D. '03, and Glory House of Miami, she adds.



"In implementing research to practice, you need your champions in the system, and you need the stakeholders' buy-in," says Runzheimer. "June Ellis was my champion. Dr. Mary Hooshmand at SONHS and Dr. Carol Biggs [Senior VP and Chief Nursing Executive at JMH and a faculty member at the SONHS] also supported the project."

# RAFT: Rapid Appraisal for Trafficking

1. It is not uncommon for people to stay in work situations that are risky or even dangerous, simply because they have no other option. *Have you ever worked or done other things in a place that made you feel scared or unsafe?*

2. *In thinking back over your past experience, have you ever been tricked or forced into doing any kind of work that you didn't want to do?*

3. Sometimes people are prevented from leaving an unfair or unsafe work situation by their employers. *Have you ever been afraid to leave or quit a work situation due to fears of violence or threats or harm to yourself or your family?*

4. *Have you ever received anything in exchange for sex (for example, a place to stay, gifts, or food)?*





# CELEBRATING

# YEARS

*of* **EXCELLENCE**  
*at* **SONHS**

A photographic exploration of the school's  
incredible evolution from 1948 to now.

The School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) is celebrating its 75th anniversary! From its inception as a nursing major in 1948 to its status as a hemispheric leader and world-class institution today, SONHS has seen dramatic changes in the nursing profession and unimaginable growth in the South Florida community it calls home.

Curated by Marina Parada  
Images: SONHS Archives



In the 1950s, students attended undergraduate nursing classes in converted World War II barracks. Today, two state-of-the-art facilities in the heart of the Coral Gables campus—the M. Christine Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies and the Simulation Hospital Advancing Education and Research (S.H.A.R.E.™)—meet the learning needs of new generations of students by integrating the most advanced didactic, research, and simulation technology available into every class. Moreover, today's SONHS students pursue degrees that take them well beyond what was possible back then, earning specialized master's and doctoral degrees that prepare them to be independent advanced practice

clinicians, NIH-funded investigators, and leaders who take their rightful place at the tables where health care and public health policy is crafted.

Under the leadership of Dean Cindy L. Munro since 2017, SONHS has embraced a new vision to be novel, optimistic, and world-changing (“NOW”), an aspiration that embraces and enhances the U's strategic plan to be known as a hemispheric, excellent, relevant, and exemplary university (“HERE”). Innovative dual-degree programs, interdisciplinary research and service projects with other UM schools, and expanding collaborations with community health care partners

are providing new opportunities for faculty and students to learn, contribute, and thrive. With more international partners than ever before, SONHS at 75 is becoming the point of contact for workforce development and patient safety training across the hemisphere.

We have navigated a steady course through decades of unprecedented immigration and the development of our South Florida community into a major metropolis that stands at the crossroads of the Americas. We survived a catastrophic Category 5 hurricane and a global pandemic, never wavering in our response to the most vulnerable. We have adapted to momentous changes in population, the

built environment, and the health care professions, always remaining on the front lines of clinical care. Through it all, we have flourished. The photos on the following pages tell the story of 75 years of extraordinary advancement and unwavering dedication, 75 years of excellence. Come walk with us through this remarkable and historic three-quarter-century journey.

*Although unable to include all those who have impacted the SONHS trajectory in this limited space, we are excited to share that a “75th Anniversary Memory Book” will be dedicated to celebrate them and this incredible milestone.*

1948

1950

1960

1970

1990



In 1948, the nursing major was introduced at the University of Miami. It was South Florida's first collegiate nursing program.



Ann Marie McCrystal, B.S.N. '59, changed her major from music and drama to nursing in the 1950s. “As soon as I spent the first day at Doctors Hospital, I knew all the drama I was looking for was right there!” she recalls. “That summer, after spending six weeks in the OR, I knew I had found my home.”

(See our Alumni Profile on page 35 for McCrystal's story.)

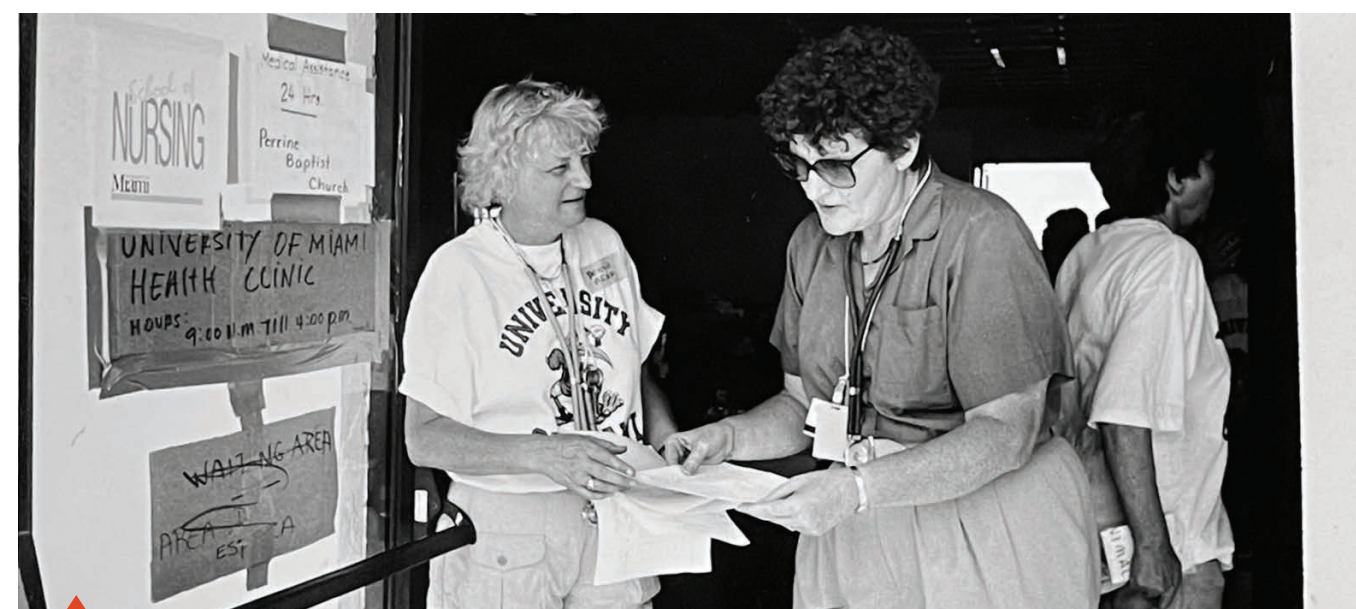


Nursing became its own school in 1968 and its first dean, Gwendoline MacDonald, was appointed in 1970. During the 1970s, the school established a Master of Science in Nursing and one of Florida's first midwifery programs. The Ph.D. in nursing program was launched in 1985.

In the 1950s, the Department of Nursing was formally established in the College of Arts and Sciences. The first class of 10 students graduated in 1956 under department chair Dora Eldredge Blackmon, who introduced a “team nursing” class in local hospitals to improve response times and triaging of patients needing the most urgent help.



During the 1950s postwar boom, Department of Nursing classes were held in temporary World War II barracks that students called “the cardboard college.”



When Hurricane Andrew struck in 1992, the school started a nurse-managed primary care clinic in the devastated region of South Dade. Pictured, right, then-Dean Horner at the pop-up clinic in Homestead.



2000

"When I was completing my B.S.N. in 2002, the school of nursing was still housed in the old building on 57th Avenue, right at the edge of the campus," recalls professor of clinical and associate dean for hemispheric and global initiatives Dr. Johis Ortega. "It was an isolated, outdated two-story building with just a few offices and one lab where we did all of our health assessment practicums. There were no classrooms—we had to use classrooms in other buildings on campus."



Dean Nilda (Nena) Peragallo Montano was appointed dean in 2003 with a mandate to lead the school into the new century.

As the school reinvented itself for the 21st century, it added a B.S. in Health Science degree, and changed its name to the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) in 2004. The following year, SONHS introduced Nurse Anesthesia and Acute Care master's degree programs, as well as global studies programs in Chile and Haiti.



Launched in 2009, the school's first D.N.P. degree program served as a national educational model. It was designed and promoted by then-Associate Dean JoAnn Trybulski (1950-2018).



Completed in 2006, the 53,000-square-foot M. Christine Schwartz Center for Nursing and Health Studies houses SONHS faculty and administrative offices, and features smart classrooms, clinical practice labs, seminar and conference rooms, and high-tech computer labs, all equipped with industry-leading technology.

SONHS launched Florida's first B.S.N.-to-D.N.P. in Nurse Anesthesia program in 2014.



2010

Following Haiti's devastating 2010 earthquake, a SONHS team traveled to Cap-Haitien to implement a culturally-adapted educational program training health care professionals to identify and treat mental health patients. In 2011, SONHS introduced South Florida's first Bachelor of Science in Public Health degree program.



Dean Cindy L. Munro takes the helm at SONHS in 2017, setting a new vision for a school that is Novel, Optimistic, and World-Changing ("NOW") in alignment with the U's Roadmap to Our New Century.

The 5-story, 41,000-square-foot Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™) opened its doors in 2017. It provides on-site, virtual, and extended-reality simulation opportunities in a variety of clinical, research, and educational settings.



Today, SONHS is home to the world-class Jorie Healthcare Partners Biobehavioral Research Laboratory. The lab supports emergent lines of research in a wide range of critical areas, fueling advances in the science of holistic, patient-centered care.

S.H.A.R.E.™ offers fully-equipped, customizable environments including an ambulance bay, emergency department, incident command center, outpatient clinics, labor and delivery suites, operating rooms, adult and pediatric intensive care, medical-surgical units, a home health care residence, and much more.



S.H.A.R.E.™ is promoting interprofessional collaboration and lifelong learning to improve patient safety outcomes. It captures the real-life flow of interaction, giving students and researchers the ability to assess and effectively address every possible safety breakdown in the hospital setting.



# Sharing the SONHS Spirit

## 25 Years of Growth and Gratitude



**Gersom Manresa** joined SONHS in 1998 and serves as senior manager for Information Technology. “For over 25 years, I have had the honor of being part of the SONHS family,” he says. “I have witnessed the leadership of five deans—Dean Horner, Interim Dean Pontious, Dean Peragallo, Interim Dean Norris, and Dean Munro—and three presidents—President Foote, President Shalala, and President Frenk. Each left a unique imprint on the school’s

legacy. I fondly recall the school’s 50th anniversary celebration, complete with hot air balloon rides, and am thrilled to be part of the upcoming 75th anniversary festivities. Through the years, I have watched the school move from a run-down fraternity house on Red Road into the magnificent Schwartz Center for Nursing & Health Studies. The addition of the state-of-the-art S.H.A.R.E. simulation hospital serves as a testament to the commitment and vision of our leaders. What I cherish most, however, are the people I have had the privilege to work with and the atmosphere of mutual respect and collegiality that permeates our halls. Together, we continue to embody the SONHS mission: shaping future generations of health care professionals who will make a lasting impact on the world.”

## Most Valued Degree



**Doris Ugarriza, M.S.N. '81**, earned her master’s degree in psychiatric mental health nursing from SONHS, joining the nursing faculty in 1987. In her distinguished 25-plus-years career at UM, she served as senior associate dean for academic programs, vice dean, and professor, making a powerful impact on nursing education and research in mental health and postpartum depression. Her many career honors included a Fulbright Senior Scholar Award in Cyprus. “My most valued degree was the M.S.N. from the University of Miami. It opened the door for me to become a nurse educator and conduct a very meaningful program of research for more than 20 years,” she has said. “I feel a deep sense of gratitude toward our university, both for my education and for the opportunity to contribute to the advancement of the nursing profession.”

## Simulation Leader



**Susana Barroso, Ph.D. '16**, played a key role in launching the Simulation Hospital Advancing Research and Education (S.H.A.R.E.™) in 2017, and served as director of simulation hospital special projects from its opening through May 2020. Now on faculty at the University of North Carolina School of Nursing, she says, “I am a proud alum and former faculty at the SONHS. Under then-Dean Nena Peragallo’s leadership, I had the privilege of being involved in creating the S.H.A.R.E. simulation hospital from the first meeting, through all the stages of planning and construction, to teaching the inaugural lab. Although I am no longer at SONHS, I believe a piece of me will always be there through the students I taught, the implementation of simulation across the curriculum, and the design of S.H.A.R.E.™. I will also always carry a piece of SONHS with me. GO ‘CANES!”

## Coming Home



Serving in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps from 1994 to 2017—including two tours in Iraq—**Christopher Weidlich, B.S.N. '94, Ph.D. '13**, attained the rank of lieutenant colonel and received over a dozen medals for service. In 2020, he returned to his alma mater as an assistant professor of clinical, in teaching psychiatric-mental health nursing and clinical rotations. He explores the impact of extreme stressors on nurses, first responders, and others in his research. In 2022, the SONHS student body voted him Teacher of the Year. “I instantly fell in love with the campus and students. Miami’s diversity and multiculturalism opened my mind to a new and exciting world. I have a lot of strong, positive memories of the University of Miami—meeting my wife here and establishing lifelong friendships, to name a few. After many more years, I was looking for graduate schools to complete my Ph.D., and UM stood out again. The school has changed buildings and moved across campus since I was a first-year student, but the faculty—some of whom I’m lucky to call friends—remained terrific. They gave me a strong nursing education and experience that propelled my career forward. After retiring from the Army, my passion was to give back to those who helped me along the way. The best way to do this was to come and help impart my knowledge to the next generation of nurses who will go much further than I ever did.”

## Global Community Builder



**Johis Ortega, B.S.N. '02, M.S.N. '06, Ph.D. '10**, fled Cuba with almost nothing in 1994. He spoke no English and worked two or three jobs at a time to support himself, but he never gave up on his dream of providing health care. Today, Dr. Ortega is not only a triple alumnus of the SONHS, he is associate dean for Hemispheric and Global Initiatives and a professor of clinical. In addition, he is an emergency department nurse practitioner and internationally respected educator leading the school’s PAHO/WHO Collaborating Centre for Nursing Human Resources Development and Patient Safety and its Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training Program grant from the NIH. “This is my calling. Being engaged in this school’s past, present, and future has been a dream come true,” he says. “I cannot imagine my life without the mentors who saw my potential and empowered me to soar beyond my wildest expectations. Their legacy of excellence lives in me, and I hope to leave my own legacy of excellence by continuing to inspire future generations with unparalleled hands-on education, research, and service opportunities at SONHS and around the world.”

# 75 Years of Leadership at SONHS



**Dora Blackmon**  
FIRST CHAIRWOMAN  
—  
1952-1967



**Barbara Buchanan**  
DEAN  
—  
1968-1970



**Gwendoline MacDonald**  
DEAN  
—  
1970-1973



**Diane Horner**  
DEAN  
—  
1973-2002



**Sharon Pontious**  
INTERIM DEAN  
—  
2003



**Nilda Peragallo**  
DEAN  
—  
2003-2016

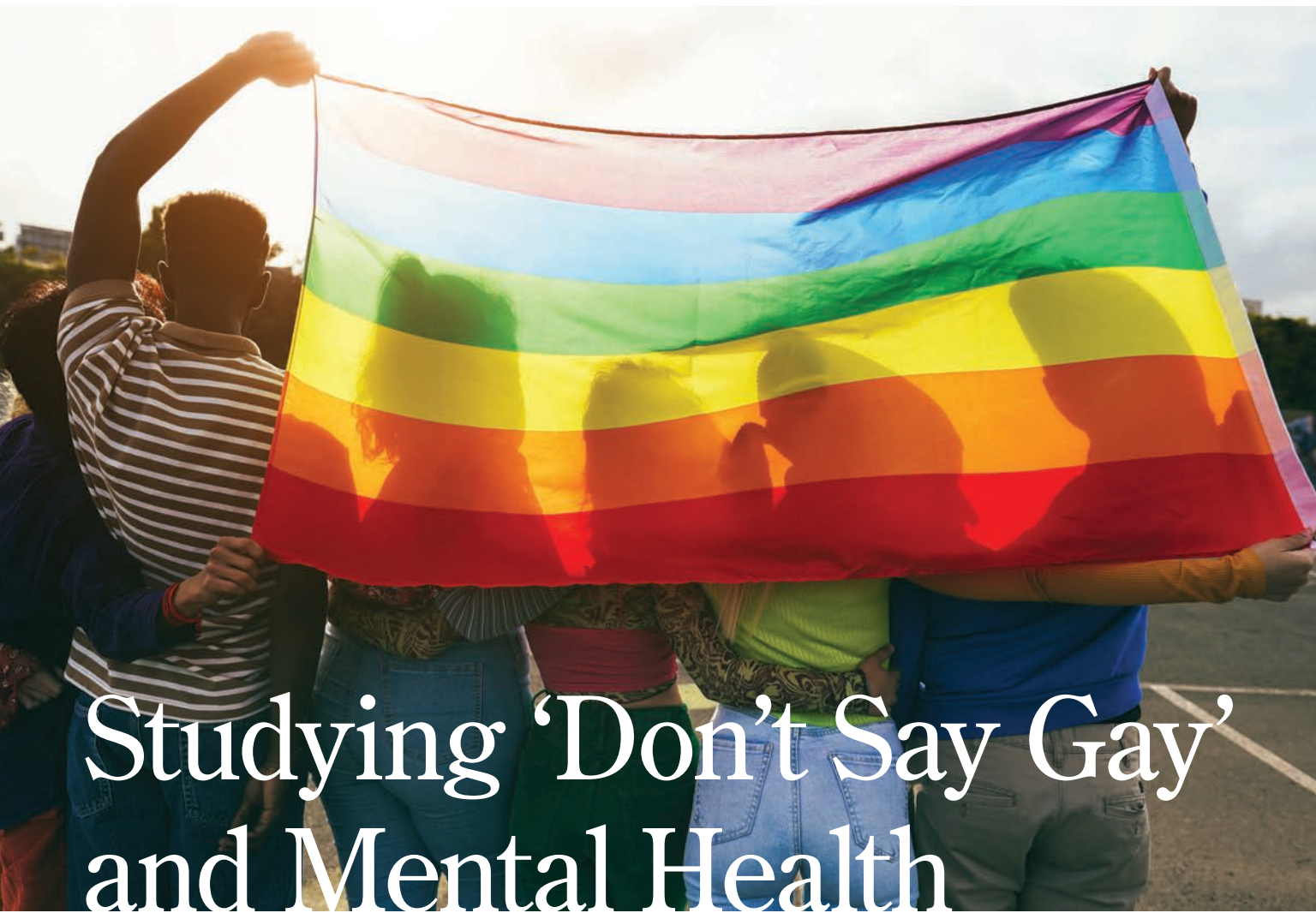


**Anne Norris**  
INTERIM DEAN  
—  
2017



**Cindy Munro**  
DEAN  
—  
2017 - PRESENT





# Studying ‘Don’t Say Gay’ and Mental Health

A six-figure grant is helping SONHS researchers launch a groundbreaking investigation into the psychological implications of Florida’s polarizing new public school policy.

By Robin Shear

Florida’s new Parental Rights in Education Act (PREA) has raised national attention due to its language prohibiting classroom instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity for students in kindergarten through third grade and requiring “age-appropriate or developmentally appropriate” instruction on these topics for students in all grades. Since PREA passed last March, there has been widespread, heated debate about the controversial policy, dubbed “Don’t Say Gay” by critics. Broadly speaking, opponents of PREA (HB 1557) insist the policy negatively impacts lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) families and educators. Proponents point to the Constitutionally protected parent-child relationship, arguing that the

measure is meant to ensure parents can determine when and how to introduce LGBTQ topics to their children.

Amid escalating political rhetoric, a team of researchers from the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) quietly and without fanfare set out on a mission to collect evidence-based data that might contribute actionable facts and findings about the mental health implications of this closely watched, precedent-setting law.

Other states had proposed similar bills, but Florida’s was the first enacted, making the 2022-2023 school year the first time the impact of such a policy on LGBTQ-identified parents, students, and

teachers could be charted anywhere in the United States.

Armed with a proposal funded by the University of Miami’s U-LINK (Laboratory for Integrative Knowledge) research program, a SONHS-led research team began studying PREA’s effects on LGBTQ students, parents, and teachers in Miami-Dade County Public Schools almost immediately, aided by community partner Safe Schools South Florida and Our Fund, an organization devoted to improving the lives of LGBTQ people in South Florida.

Based on that work, a national foundation that promotes sexual orientation and gender identity equality awarded



Dr. Gattamorta

the research team a \$100,000 grant in January to expand its county investigation of PREA’s perceived impact on the LGBTQ community across Florida. This new statewide study will yield quantitative data from the 2023-2024 school year.

“Our team will examine impacts of PREA on mental health, stigma, safety, and curricular changes in Florida public schools as perceived by public high school students, as well as LGBTQ-identified public school teachers and parents of children in any grade,” says Karina Gattamorta, Ph.D., Ed.S., the grant’s principal investigator and a SONHS research associate professor. “We hypothesize that PREA will have significant effects on the levels of minority stress perceived by all three groups and will negatively impact their mental health. We also expect to find that teachers will feel less comfortable covering LGBTQ-related content relevant to their curricula and that parents will feel significantly less comfortable disclosing their identity to students’ teachers.”

Extending the study to the entire state is important, note the researchers, because it will allow better understanding of how the law plays out in the state’s varied demographic regions. “Our study will be instrumental in building new knowledge about the ways in which anti-LGBTQ policy harms LGBTQ-identified students,

parents, and teachers,” says Dr. Gattamorta. “The negative implications of PREA are likely to disproportionately affect rural, conservative, and minority communities.”

Dr. Gattamorta, an expert in test development, statistics, and psychometrics with an advanced degree in school psychology, has devoted her academic career to understanding mental and behavioral health disparities among diverse LGBTQ youth, with the aim of advancing knowledge about the conditions needed to increase acceptance and reduce rejection for this vulnerable population. Her co-researcher on the grant is nurse scientist Nicholas Metheny, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.N., an assistant professor at SONHS who has completed several studies examining the impact of LGBT-related policy change, such as marriage equality, on the physical and mental health of LGBT people in the U.S. and United Kingdom. Rounding out the research team are Maite Mena, Psy.D., a licensed clinical psychologist and UM research assistant professor with extensive experience on implementing and evaluating programs for minority populations who experience health disparities, and SONHS Ph.D. candidate Roberto Roman Laporte. Equality Florida serves as the team’s primary community partner at the state level.

“The impact of regressive LGBTQ-related legislation is poorly understood, but Minority Stress Theory posits that less-

accepting attitudes toward LGBTQ people, especially youth, are strongly associated with poor mental health outcomes via increased internalized, anticipated, and enacted stigma,” states Dr. Gattamorta. “Support for this important research will enable us to diversify and expand our ongoing Miami-Dade study, intensify recruitment efforts, and increase our sample size across Florida.”

The researchers are aware of their investigation’s timely nature and the need to share major findings as widely and rapidly as possible. “This effort will provide key stakeholders and policymakers with the information needed to protect the well-being of LGBTQ parent, teachers, and students in Florida,” says Dr. Gattamorta. “Our findings could arm those who wish to repeal PREA with evidence for its ill effects while providing legislatures considering their own versions of PREA with the ability to make more evidence-based policy decisions.”

Studying the impact of laws like PREA is new to Dr. Gattamorta, but remains consistent with her focus on LGBTQ health. Early in her career, she discovered that nobody else was looking into mental health issues affecting Hispanic LGBTQ youth in particular. “I continued to do a lot of work around families and acceptance in that population,” she says. Recently that included a pilot study funded by the Center for Latino Health Research Opportunities (CLaRO), examining the feasibility and acceptability of the Family Acceptance Project, a behavioral health intervention for LGBT youth, among Hispanic families in South Florida.

Meanwhile, Dr. Gattamorta is encouraged and hopeful that more organizations are expressing interest in supporting research surrounding PREA. “This is on people’s radar, and they are willing to support this work,” she says. “They see the need and value that this kind of investigation brings to the community.”

*Editor’s note: As of press time, Florida’s Education Department had extended the ban through grade 12.*



## NEWS, HONORS, AWARDS



**Juan M. González**, D.N.P., A.P.R.N., A.G.A.C.N.P.-B.C., E.N.P.-C., F.N.P.-B.C., C.E.N., an award-winning associate professor of clinical at SONHS who has advanced care for thousands of patients in underserved communities from the U.S. to Latin America and the Caribbean,

was inducted into the 2022 Class of Fellows for the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. The same year, he taught advanced pathophysiology to 14 nurses studying to be oncology nurse practitioners at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (UC) nursing school in Santiago. “This is the first program in Chile where they are officially and formally educating students into the role of the nurse practitioner,” he says.



**Denise Vidot**, Ph.D., associate professor, was interviewed by *Cannabis Science and Technology* regarding her investigation into “Co-use of Cannabis and Psilocybin to Manage Mental Health Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic.” In addition, she presented at the Cannabis Science

Conference and coauthored a scholarly article with Dr. Cynthia Lebron that was featured in *Forbes* magazine.



**Yui Matsuda**, Ph.D., P.H.N.A.-B.C., R.N., M.P.H., assistant professor, coauthor, with nurse scientist Danielle Altares Sarik, of a chapter published in *Worldwide Successful Pediatric Nurse-led Models of Care*, a 2023 book edited by Cecily L. Betz and published by Springer (doi:10.1007/978-3-031-22152-1\_3). Their 26-page chapter, titled “Baby Steps: Improving the Transition from Hospital to Home for Neonatal Patients and Caregivers Through a Nurse-Led Telehealth Program,” describes the nurse-led telehealth transition of care intervention for infants in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) and their caregivers that co-creators Drs. Matsuda and Danielle Altares Sarik pioneered and implemented at Miami’s Nicklaus Children’s Hospital with an interprofessional team of researchers, NICU professionals, and telehealth specialists to address a gap in care after discharge. “The program focused on providing integral support during the discharge process and after the infant returned to home and community,” states their chapter’s abstract. The Baby Steps program has impacted over 400 families.



**Cynthia Lebron**, Ph.D., assistant professor, coauthored a study highlighted by *Forbes* magazine about the information-giving and -receiving habits of cannabis-using pregnant women communicating via an online forum. Additionally, her grant proposal “Maternal and Infant Health Outcomes

by Mother’s Country of Birth Among Hispanics in Florida” received funding for 2022-2023 from the National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute.



**John M. Clochesy**, Ph.D., R.N., retired in December 2022 after five years of service at SONHS. During a party in his honor, Dr. Clochesy’s colleagues, led by Dean Cindy L. Munro, wished him the very best in his future endeavors and thanked him for his multifaceted contributions as vice dean, professor, and director of evaluation and strategic initiatives.

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# Making Health Studies a Top Priority

By Carlos Harrison

Dr. Arsham Alamian remembers the day his interest ignited in what would become his passion, and his career. He was, at the time, a premed student at McGill University. “A guest lecturer came into our physiology class,” Alamian recalls. “He started by presenting these intriguing graphs and charts about the trends of cardiovascular disease in Canada, in the U.S., in different countries worldwide.”

Captivated by the idea of looking for the causes of diseases and the impact of societal systems on health, Alamian went on to become a noted epidemiologist focused on chronic diseases research and public health. He is an elected fellow of the American College of Epidemiology, elected leader of the American Public Health Association and, since 2020, an associate professor and associate dean for Health Studies at the School of Nursing and Health Studies.

Alamian’s mother was a nurse for 25 years. He, however, first aimed to become a medical doctor. Eventually, though, after receiving his B.Sc. in physiology, Alamian earned a master of science degree in pharmacy with a specialization in pharmacoepidemiology, followed by a Ph.D. in public health with an epidemiology specialization.

After graduation, he took a position at East Tennessee State University’s College of Public Health, rising to be a tenured associate professor of epidemiology and director of the institution’s Master of Public Health program.

Joining SONHS and moving to South Florida just as health officials struggled to roll out an effective response to the COVID pandemic presented unique challenges. It also offered a rare opportunity to promote the importance of public health.



“There was growing interest in public health,” Alamian says. “People were hearing more about public health epidemiologists. It was a good time for me to come here to be a voice for public health.”

His research projects repeatedly harken back to that guest lecture on cardiovascular disease risk in children and minority populations that originally piqued his interest. He has been an investigator on multiple National Institutes of Health (NIH) grants. A recent study he led of the association between family factors and childhood obesity revealed that poverty proves to be the strongest obesity predictor across time.

“We [in society] always look at addressing pain, and we look at treatment,” says Alamian. “But when you study what can be done to help people, the evidence points to addressing basic socioeconomic determinants.”

To date, Alamian has published 44

peer-reviewed manuscripts, authored 85 research presentations, and obtained more than \$3 million in external funding for his research. Currently, he is part of a five-year NIH grant with the University of Central Florida examining how serious gaming can impact the way cancer patients cope with their chemotherapy’s side effects.

He is also, of course, dedicated to furthering the SONHS educational mission. As associate dean, Alamian worked closely with colleagues in the Miller School of Medicine’s Department of Public Health Sciences to create an accelerated 4+1 M.PH./M.S.PH. degree path for health science students. Now Alamian is focused intently on the demanding process of achieving reaccreditation status from the prestigious Council on Education for Public Health for the school’s public health undergraduate degree (see page 11). And, says Alamian, there’s more to come. “We’re exploring the expansion of our Health Studies programs.”



# Message from the President



With the School of Nursing and Health Studies celebrating 75 Years of Excellence this year, it's the perfect opportunity to build excitement around reconnecting with fellow alumni through our prestigious alma mater. As president of the SONHS Alumni Association, I hosted the inaugural SONHS Alumni Happy Hour of 2023 at the UHealth medical campus this past March. As we plan future activities like this terrific networking event, I look forward to getting to know more of our awesome grads. This is the time to get involved and have fun while helping to steer SONHS toward its next milestone. There are many ways to get involved and varying levels of commitment—from joining the SONHS Alumni Association board, to signing in for a virtual meeting, to attending in-person social gatherings like our latest Alumni Happy Hour. We health professionals know how important team communication is to successful outcomes, so I encourage your feedback! Please tell me how your SONHS Alumni Association can help raise engagement during this 75th year of educational excellence at SONHS! To get in touch, and stay in touch, please contact Jose F. Gonzalez, SONHS development coordinator, at [j.gonzalez36@miami.edu](mailto:j.gonzalez36@miami.edu) or 305-284-8593.

Go SONHS Grads, Go 'Canes!  
Renee Longini, B.S.N. '09, D.N.P. '16  
C.R.N.A., Jackson Health System

## 1960s

**Eleanor Lamb Malchus, B.S.N. '62**, shares memories of her time at SONHS in honor of its 75th anniversary. "I recall learning beginning nursing skills in the very hot shacks," she writes. "My education at the 'U' prepared me for my first jobs as the R.N. in 10- and 35-bed hospitals in rural Georgia. From there, I worked in ICU, peds, and ER in Ohio, and combined that with being a clinical instructor for 18 years. Upon moving to Arizona, I worked at urgent care facilities, then a health resort, and finished my career as a substitute school nurse until retiring in 2020."

## 1980s

**Janie Canty-Mitchell, M.S.N. '88, Ph.D. '93**, has reported that she is the chair of the Physical and Mental Health Committee for the Wilmington, North Carolina Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

## 1990s

**Rick García, B.S.N. '95**, was named the new CEO of the Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (OADN), OADN announced in January.

## 2000s

**Elizabeth L. Vieito-Smith, M.S.N. '09, D.N.P. '12**, was re-elected beginning March 29 to a two-year term on the Nursing Consortium of Florida's Board of Directors by voting representatives of the Consortium's member organizations.

## 2010s

**Todd Haner, D.N.P. '13**, was named chief nursing officer (CNO) of HCA Florida Blake Hospital in Bradenton, Florida, HCA Florida Healthcare announced this past October. Before this role, Haner was CNO at HCA Florida Sarasota Doctors Hospital and was CNO at Lower Keys Medical Center in Key West.

**Shakira Henderson, Ph.D. '15**, is the 2023 Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses (AWHONN) president. A Daisy Nurse Leader Award Winner (2020), she was featured on Becker's Healthcare Podcast in October 2022, discussing her research-related leadership roles at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and UNC Health, health care trends she is following, and more.

## 2020s

**Kelsey Cook, B.S.N. '21**, took a position as an R.N. at Tufts Medical Center this year, relocating from Washington, D.C. to Boston.

**Kelsi Minnich, B.S.N. '22**, announced that she began work as an R.N. in the Family Birthplace at Sentara RMH Medical Center in Virginia.

Send us your exciting news to [nursing\\_alumni@miami.edu](mailto:nursing_alumni@miami.edu)

# Reflections of a New Nurse

Paula Boling, B.H.S. '00, A.B.S.N. '22 and Margarita Espinal, A.B.S.N. '22,



Espinal and Boling

Over 20 years ago, Paula Boling earned her health science degree from the University of Miami, eagerly anticipating a nursing career, but as the wife of a soldier, life's twists and turns led her in a different direction.

That is, until 2022, when she returned to the U, enrolling in the competitive Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program (A.B.S.N.) at the School of Nursing and Health Studies.

This time she had company—her daughter Margarita Espinal, A.B.S.N. '22, was accepted into the program with her, and together they embarked on their dual dreams of joining the nursing profession. Boling was the first in the family to enroll in the A.B.S.N. program. "After the pandemic, so much changed for so many people that I knew I had to go back to school to help others and make a difference," says Boling.

Her action inspired Espinal. "I've always wanted to study with my mom because she's my best friend, and I have seen her dedication with anything she undertakes," says Espinal. "She's a hard worker with a brilliant mind!"

The experience was positive for both parent and child. "My perspective on the school has only intensified my love for the U!" says Boling, now a double 'Cane. "Completing nursing school with my daughter was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that I was blessed with experiencing. We became stronger alongside each other with help from the best professors."

Since graduating, mother and daughter have both passed the national licensure examination for registered nurses (NCLEX-RN). As they interview at South Florida's top hospitals, they reflect on their new

career path: "Being a nurse is not only the knowledge you use to care for others, but the compassion and love you provide in caring for your patients."

"The nursing profession carries a huge responsibility to provide safe and appropriate care in order to help your patients be at their optimal health."



with UM President Julio Frenk





## In Memoriam

**Karolina Wiech, A.B.S.N. '14, R.N., C.N.O.R.,** was a Chicago-based registered nurse and an artist. A fellow student from her graduating class informed faculty member Juan González of the sad news that Wiech died in January 2023. “Karolina was a very kind and brilliant student who received our academic award,” says Dr. González. “This is truly heartbreaking.” A student in the accelerated nursing program, Wiech joined the Multicultural Nursing Student Association, served as class representative for the National Student Nurses’ Association, and volunteered at the Miller School of Medicine’s DOCS health fairs. In addition, she was invited into the nursing honor society, Sigma Theta Tau International. She graduated magna cum laude and received the SONHS Excellence in Academic and Clinical Performance Award. Wiech went on to work as an operating room nurse and safety officer, as well as a perioperative nursing educator with a talent for transformational nursing

leadership, she stated on LinkedIn. In 2021, she contributed her mosaic sculpture to the “COVID and Caring” art show at her workplace, AMITA Health. She wrote in her artist statement, “The seeds of resilience are planted in the way we process the negative and most difficult events in our lives.” In May 2022, Wiech’s first public commissioned artwork was displayed as part of “Shrines of Resilience,” a collection of women invited to make “altars of hope, reflection, and intention.” Her goal, she said, was to spread love, hope, resilience, beauty, and compassion one step (or mosaic) at a time. Her 3-D artwork, “Living,” depicted the tree of life. It was one of 25 works exhibited along Chicago’s Bloomingdale Trail, an elevated park floating 18 feet above city streets. In her artist statement, Wiech wrote “You are not alone. We are all branches of a greater wholeness. The trunk of the tree represents motherhood and the source of creation. On one side, the sun represents the start of a new dawn: a chance for a new day and a new future. The moon and windy night on the opposite side represents that even though we feel we are in the darkness, there is light from the moon illuminating our path; the wind teaches us to be flexible and flow with life’s ups and downs. It is after a big storm that the sun comes out! And just like the flowers and nature around us that require respite and trusting the unseen periods of growth to bloom to their full potential, so do we.”

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# Drawn by the Lights and Drama

By Robin Shear



**Ann Marie McCrystal, B.S.N. '59,** has been committed to the mission of the Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) since

helping bring the well-known nonprofit organization to Vero Beach in 1975. For nearly 50 years, including as board chair, she has been instrumental in growing VNA Home Care and Hospice resources for residents of Florida’s Treasure Coast.

“I’m doing something to help someone every day, not just for my own family or very good friends, but in the community and beyond,” says McCrystal, 86. “It’s a good feeling to go to bed at night knowing that if you close your eyes and never wake again, you have done something in your life that mattered, that meant something to somebody.”

Once upon a time, however, she expected a very different future. An accomplished teen accordion player, McCrystal performed in Miami Beach hotels and on cruises. In 1955, she came to the University of Miami as a freshman, intent on an acting career, she explained during her SONHS Alumna of Distinction speech in 2017.

But a new path was soon illuminated by her nighttime view of Doctors Hospital from campus. “I saw all those lights on inside, drawing me. I believe there was some higher power that pointed me towards Doctors Hospital, saying, ‘Ann Marie, this is your destiny and you’ve got to take it,’” she recalls. “This was something I had to explore.”

Nursing 101 was relatively new at the College of Arts & Sciences. “We had our classes in makeshift cottages we called Cardboard College,” she says. “I paid \$25 for a yellow uniform with a white



pinafore and mortarboard nurse’s cap.” She still has the original cap she wore at UM. That summer, McCrystal observed her first surgery.

“As soon as I walked into the operating room, I knew that was the drama I needed in my life,” she says. A day after graduating, she went to work at Jackson Memorial Hospital and later ran its open heart surgical OR—Florida’s first. “Every day I went to work at JMH as an OR nurse was exciting,” says McCrystal. “I just knew I was home.”

Jackson was also where she met surgical intern Hugh McCrystal. After marrying, the pair moved to Washington, D.C. He was a urology resident at Georgetown Hospital, while she set up the VA’s open heart OR, at times scrubbing in with Dr. Charles Hufnagel, inventor of the first artificial heart valve.

Returning to Florida in 1966, McCrystal stayed busy raising three children, running her husband’s urology practice,

and fundraising for the local theater guild, the VNA, VNA Hospice House, and Indian River Medical Center.

In addition, she served on the SONHS Visiting Committee at a time of transformative growth for the school. Eight years ago, McCrystal was appointed to the Indian River County Hospital District Board of Trustees, stepping down just recently to care for her husband.

“Through it all, I was always very proud of the nursing profession and the B.S.N. I received from the University of Miami,” says McCrystal. In fact, she acknowledges, she would go on for her doctorate degree if she were starting her career today.

“Continue your education,” she advises current students. “Every day there is something to learn that can assist you in your ability to help people through health care. If you would like to make a difference in a life, there isn’t a better, more rewarding calling than nursing.”



# Taking Nurse Leadership into the OR

By Rochelle Broder-Singer

John Paul “JP” Moyle had been a registered nurse for nearly 17 years when he decided to advance his nursing practice. He had already worked in intensive and critical care units in his native Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, Canada, and the U.S. before entering the B.S.N.-D.N.P. Nurse Anesthesia Track at the School of Nursing and Health Studies in 2021.

The crucial leadership role certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) play in the operating room (OR) was a significant factor in Moyle choosing this specialty. “You will be the one at the head of the bed, monitoring the patient minute by minute, second by second,” he says. “You are the one making sure the patient is comfortable, making sure the surgery is done safely.”

After earning his B.S.N. at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila, Moyle worked in Philippine Heart Center’s surgical ICU, the medical ICU at Dubai’s Rashid Hospital and Trauma Centre, the critical care unit in Toronto’s North York General Hospital, and the cardiovascular ICU of Detroit’s Henry Ford Hospital.

Moyle notes that during the time he spent obtaining his Canadian nursing license, he took a nurse assistant position. It was a humbling experience that helped him to develop a deeper appreciation of “how important every team member is in providing quality health care for a patient,” he says.

Moyle’s dedication to his patients was recognized with nursing awards from both North York and Henry Ford hospitals. At Henry Ford, he also served as a preceptor and chaired the education and practice committee. “You have to step up, you have to lead,” he says. “It is important that your voice is heard and you’re acting on it. That makes a difference in providing quality care to the patient.”



Moyle continues to lead at SONHS, where he is his class representative and a scholar focused on advancing virtual reality (VR) simulation education. “JP is very innovative and has embraced the mentorship role,” says Dr. Greta Mitzova-Vladinov, Nurse Anesthesia Program director. Last year, he presented a poster with Mitzova-Vladinov and classmate Daphnie Andre at the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology Congress. Their presentation, “Virtual Reality Simulation for OR Clinical Exposure for Novice Anesthesia Learners,” showed high levels of acceptance among learners for VR technology.

This year, Moyle was awarded a Jackson Memorial Hospital research grant to implement a quality improvement project. Moyle will build on his doctoral work to examine the use of VR simulation for training nurse anesthetists to address malignant hyperthermia crises in the OR. Malignant hyperthermia—an uncommon but severe reaction to certain anesthesia drugs—is largely unpredictable and potentially fatal, making preparation for its occurrence vital for CRNAs.

Moyle is hopeful that VR will be proven an effective—as well as a cost-cutting and time-saving—alternative to traditional malignant hyperthermia simulation trainings. To gather evidence, he will outfit participating CRNAs with Oculus Quest VR headsets. These practitioners will have to instruct avatars within the virtual OR scenario, much as they would fellow clinicians. Pre- and post-training tests will determine the experience’s impact on learner knowledge, skill, and confidence. Positive results could lead to more VR simulation use in CRNA training.

Moyle cites many reasons he wanted to earn his doctorate at SONHS. Chief among those as an LGBTQ person of color was the diversity and inclusiveness of the school and University. “University of Miami does not just tolerate diversity—they celebrate diversity,” he says. “My success as a student relies on that, on being celebrated for who I am.” After graduating this December, Moyle plans to relocate to the U.S. with his Toronto-based husband because Canada doesn’t currently have nurse anesthetists. With characteristic vision, Moyle forecasts, “Maybe I will be the one to bring it there.”



Photography by Mitchell Zagns







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