

heartbeat

Fall 2019

University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies



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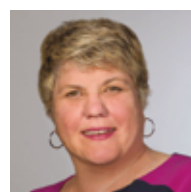
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February 28

Dr. Patricia Brennan

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March 16

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Nursing NOW:
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and service across
the hemisphere.

Novel
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World-changing

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Welcome to
the Fall 2019
Issue of
Heartbeat

My first two years as Dean of this school have been nothing short of a fantastic voyage. I've attended global health colloquia in Havana, Cuba, and Panama City, Panama; welcomed exchange students from Chile, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic; met with public health researchers from Colombia, Costa Rica, and Peru; and convened leading officials from the Pan American Health Organization, World Health Organization, and health ministries throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

These and so many other rich opportunities for engagement have informed my perspective on our school's deepening role in the Western Hemisphere and our ongoing pursuit of universal health. I am so proud of our hemispheric leadership at SONHS. We are not just accountable to our neighbors. We are inextricably linked, geographically and culturally, through climate effects and historical experience to current events. Our bonds span borders and our actions—institution to institution, person to person—build bridges cemented by collaboration, study, and service.

We've dedicated this issue of *Heartbeat* to our growing global impact. From critical capacity building in Guyana to much-needed surgical care in Guatemala, our cover story outlines the constellation of hemispheric connections we've created to help brighten our path toward the health workforce of tomorrow.

In another feature, you'll read about the kind of stimulating health disparities research our brightest scientific minds from diverse ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds



are conducting with noted mentors abroad, from the Dominican Republic to Australia, thanks to prestigious grants from the NIH's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. You'll learn how these outstanding participants are fulfilling the national mandate to build a culturally competent scientific workforce and end health disparities that plague socially, economically, and environmentally disadvantaged communities.

In this issue, you can follow the footsteps of another outstanding researcher as she creates new knowledge through her work in the Pan-American region. Epidemiologist Denise Vidot, Ph.D. '15, is studying the far-reaching implications of the fast-growing medical marijuana industry, from right here in South Florida to rural outposts of Jamaica.

And finally, see close up what it's like to train as a crisis responder for the most complex natural and human-made disasters in a world growing ever-more vulnerable to extreme events. Whether it's a magnitude 7 earthquake in Haiti; a Category 5 hurricane in the Bahamas, or the sort of crushing mass casualty incidents in Orlando and Parkland that

struck our own state of Florida, SONHS is doing the difficult work of readying faculty, students, and staff to be first on the scene in our local communities or anywhere in our hemisphere we may be called to serve.

Read on for more about the exciting, important work SONHS is invested in throughout the hemisphere. This recognition of our hemispheric role has led SONHS to join the U.S. coalition and steering committee of Nursing Now, a prominent campaign aimed at raising the profile and numbers of nurses worldwide. Stay tuned for our not-to-be-missed events celebrating the official designation of 2020 as the first worldwide Year of the Nurse and Midwife and the bicentennial of Florence Nightingale's birth. As you can see, there has never been a better time than now to explore our hemispheric horizons. I invite you to turn the page with us and join your SONHS community on this incredible journey to the future of health care and lifelong learning.

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

Meet Stephen McGhee

Associate Dean for Nursing Undergraduate Programs



Half a dozen personnel in flak jackets kneel over an injured soldier in the hull of a CH-47 Chinook, battling to save their patient's life in the belly of the airborne heavy-lift helicopter. The scene, depicted by artist Stuart Brown in a piece titled "In Safe Hands," is one of the first images you see when you enter the office of Stephen McGhee, associate dean for nursing undergraduate programs. It's a scenario McGhee lived many times as a decorated lieutenant colonel in the British Armed Forces. The artwork, a gift from a medical unit McGhee served with, is among the medals and other mementos on display—reminders of what he calls some of the most important clinical and leadership experiences of his nursing career.

These days, the associate professor of clinical has traded helicopters for curricula and military command for another kind of leadership. McGhee served as a Commanding Officer Designate for the 225 Medical Regiment in Dundee, Scotland, and a Regimental Nursing Officer, 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment, during Operation Telic/Iraq Freedom in 2003. He had to resign his commission after joining SONHS in May, but he is more than ready to meet his newest challenge while transitioning to civilian life in South Florida.

"Miami's a really interesting, eclectic city, from culture to food to people," he says. "It's a rich environment that

my wife and I love so far." McGhee came here from the University of South Florida College of Nursing, where he earned his D.N.P and held positions as assistant dean for undergraduate and global programs, assistant professor, Coverdell Fellow supervisor, and director of Global Affairs. He says he was attracted by SONHS' rising reputation for excellence in education, research, and simulation. "Nationally there are not many schools of nursing with access to such a fantastic clinical simulation facility," he says.

"You cannot be a nurse unless you have an ability to listen, and be caring and compassionate."

In October, McGhee was inducted as a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing, one of the profession's highest honors, for his international work on emergency nursing and care of military personnel and veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Dean Cindy L. Munro describes his scholarship and expertise in developing and leading global programs for undergrad nursing students as great assets to the school.



"My objectives are to improve the student experience at SONHS and really focus on their ability to deliver compassionate care to people at very, very vulnerable times in their lives," says McGhee, who taught evidence-based practice this semester. "You cannot be a nurse unless you have an ability to listen, and be caring and compassionate."

An international editorial advisor to *Nurse Education Today*, McGhee has wide-ranging scholarly interests that include nurse-education research techniques and emergency care for tropical diseases like Zika, Hantavirus, Cutaneous leishmaniasis, and Onchocerciasis (river blindness). He was a nurse practitioner in his native Scotland for most of his 25-year clinical career. Since 2010, he has also served as an expert witness for legal cases in the UK. McGhee matriculated at the University of West Scotland (RN), Glasgow Caledonian University (BSc), and Queen Margaret University (MSc, RNT, PGCE).

"What is so attractive to me about nursing is that it is not just about the pathology you see at the bedside or in the doctor's office," he says. "It's about understanding the pathophysiology, and the physiological and psychological needs of the patient and the patient's family."

► **HB VIDEO EXTRA:**
<https://vimeo.com/362408972>

Connecting the Thoughts

Fall Lecture Series explores exciting research on managing PTSD, pain, and workplace stressors

After 16 weeks of traditional psychotherapy for post-traumatic stress disorder, Afghanistan War veteran Brian Anderson was still experiencing psychological trauma. He decided to try Accelerated Resolution Therapy, or ART, a brief "mind-body" treatment for PTSD, depression, and other psychological ailments being studied at a Florida research university. Anderson's case, and the promise of ART, was the subject of a lecture by Kevin E. Kip, University of South Florida Distinguished Health Professor, epidemiologist, and biostatistician.

Considered the leading researcher on ART worldwide, Kip kicked off the 2019 Fall Lecture Series at SONHS in September. In his talk, titled "Accelerated Resolution Therapy: An Innovative Mental Health and Mind-Body Intervention to Treat PTSD and Related Comorbidities," Kip showed part of a video interview with Anderson, who had lost two friends to sniper fire during his military service. "I did have a lot of anger issues," recounted Anderson. But after just one ART session, he said, he felt significantly better, as if the traumatic memories "constantly invading me in the here and now" had been moved to "long-term storage."

Grant funding from the U.S. Department of Defense launched Kip's exploration of alternative therapies for PTSD like ART almost a decade ago. Developed in 2008 by Laney Rosenzweig, ART combines multiple sets of calming eye movements with visualization of traumatic experience. Unlike traditional psychotherapies used to address PTSD, ART does not require discussion of the trauma or commitment to prolonged treatment. After completing a handful of studies and publishing 17 papers, Kip and his colleagues have found ART to be 60 to 70 percent effective, with a 94 percent completion rate for the protocol, which typically ranges from one to five clinical sessions.

Kip and his team believe "having the brain do something benign and different to change the context of the trauma," is how ART "really quiets down all the symptoms of PTSD," explained Kip. The data suggest ART offers suitable treatment for a significant and growing population of veterans coping with the effects of brain injuries and PTSD, from traumatic memories to physical pain. But Kip said much more evidence must be gathered for widespread implementation of ART to become a reality.

This semester's other lecturers included Huda Abu-Saad Huijer, founding dean of the Hariri School of Nursing at American University of Beirut in Lebanon, who discussed her program of research on pain management and palliative care, and Alan Finnegan, professor of Nursing and Military Mental Health and director of the Westminster Centre for Research in Ageing, Mental Health and Veterans at the University of Chester, England, who addressed challenges and psychological stressors faced by military nurses. "The public health experts featured in the Fall Lecture Series are conducting research that impacts millions of people in various sectors of society," said Cindy L. Munro, dean and professor.

SONHS recently announced a not-to-be-missed Spring 2020 speaker series celebrating the Year of the Nurse and Midwife and the bicentennial of Florence Nightingale's birth, as well as the school's involvement in Nursing Now, a campaign to raise the profile of nursing worldwide.

For additional information on upcoming lecture series, please visit:

www.SONHS.miami.edu/LectureSeries



Dr. Kevin E. Kip and Dean Munro



Dr. Huda Abu-Saad Huijer



Dr. Alan Finnegan

Activating Hispanic Health Now

Novel ¡ActuaYa! intervention for Hispanic women 50 and up awarded Community Foundation of Broward BFit grant

Hispanic women over 50 are more likely than their non-Hispanic white peers to suffer from hypertension, diabetes, obesity, HIV, and a host of other chronic diseases. Though older Hispanic women are on track to number 15 million in the U.S. by 2050, they remain underrepresented in research and in receiving health care.

Determined to change this and help aging Hispanic women take charge of their health, Rosina Cianelli, associate professor and director of the M.S.N.-D.N.P. program at SONHS, developed “¡ActuaYa!” or “Act Now!”—a first-of-its-kind evidence-based intervention targeting Hispanic women ages 50 and up.

A \$65,000 BFit grant from the Community Foundation of Broward will enable Cianelli to implement and study ¡ActuaYa! Cianelli’s community partner on the grant is Broward County-based nonprofit Hispanic Unity of Florida. “We are grateful to the Community Foundation of Broward for its enthusiastic support of ¡ActuaYa!,” says Cianelli, a nurse researcher with expertise in health disparities and Hispanic women. “The knowledge we gain from this study will prove invaluable in continuing to identify effective, sustainable ways to address health disparities among this vulnerable population in the context of healthy aging.”

According to America’s Health Rankings, 50.6 percent of Hispanic women are obese, compared to 54.8 percent of non-Hispanic black women and 38 percent of non-Hispanic white women. Cianelli and co-investigators Natalia Villegas, Ph.D. ’12, associate professor of clinical, and Giovanna De Oliveira, Ph.D. ’15, assistant professor of clinical, will work with Hispanic women age 50 and older living in west Hollywood, Florida.



The study is designed for women who do not meet prescribed activity levels and reside in a “food desert,” described by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as an area with limited access to supermarkets or other healthy, affordable food sources.

Participants will gather every two weeks for a moderate-impact workout routine, facilitated discussions about chronic diseases, role-playing exercises, and communication skills activities. Success will be measured by improvements in body-mass index (body fat composition, weight, height), blood pressure, A1C test results (used to diagnose diabetes), HIV knowledge, and physical activity/exercise as measured by a wrist pedometer.

“The purpose is to empower older Hispanic women with interventions tailored to their unique cultural and physical needs,” says Cianelli. “This allows us to create a supportive community, promote social interaction, and encourage healthy sexual behaviors among individuals who share cultural, ethnic, generational, and gender affinities.”

¡ActuaYa! was one of just three BFit grantees selected from 15 applications. BFit grants support projects aimed at

helping adults make healthy choices and increase their activity. According to the Foundation, about 66 percent of adults in Broward are considered overweight and 24 percent are considered obese. “[W]e must take bold action on this issue,” says Linda Carter, the Foundation’s president and CEO. “Diseases related to chronic obesity are the second leading cause of death, behind cigarette smoking.”

In a preliminary study, 70 percent of Hispanic women age 50 and older Cianelli surveyed in South Florida self-reported as being overweight and not physically active. “Many of these risk factors are largely modifiable,” says Cianelli, a Judo instructor who has studied the role of exercise in preventing chronic disease and related disabilities. “Physical activity conveys an array of health benefits for older adults. Practicing exercise at older ages has been shown to increase self-esteem, decrease depression symptoms, promote a healthy body weight, and contribute to managing and improving chronic diseases.”

Support for this project has been provided by the following Funds at the Community Foundation of Broward:
Deinhardt Charitable Fund
Maxine Powers Hofert Fund
Norman R. and Ruth Rales Fund
Kresge Unrestricted Fund

Vaccines, Vaping, and More

MYSTERIOUS VAPING ILLNESS

With severe respiratory illnesses across 25 states, some resulting in death, the Centers for Disease Control issued an official health advisory titled “Severe Pulmonary Disease Associated with Using E-Cigarette Products.” Media outlets asked assistant professor Denise Vidot, Ph.D. ’15, who is currently examining health impacts of electronic cannabis and tobacco devices, for her take on the topic.

“Not all electronic smoking devices are created equal,” Vidot told *The Washington Post*. “We don’t know what are in these vaporizing pens ... from unregulated sources.” Asked if vaping is safer than smoking, she told National Public Radio’s Miami affiliate, WLRN-FM: “That’s the million-dollar question. ... I don’t think anyone has the answer right now.” In a Q&A with News@TheU, she added, “[T]he speed at which diverse electronic smoking devices are being introduced to society is alarming when compared to the speed at which we are obtaining data to make evidence-based decisions on the health impact of these devices. ... [T]he sharp increase in cases in a short period of time indicates that rigorous epidemiologic studies should be conducted to address the health impact of vaping.”



and can have more serious disease when they become ill, are also vulnerable. These people depend on the healthy members of the community being vaccinated so that diseases don’t spread to the vulnerable people in the community. ... Although children really need to be vaccinated as infants and preschoolers, checking vaccination status among schoolchildren does help to reduce outbreaks.

HEPATITIS A ON THE RISE

With Florida hepatitis A rates climbing, John Clochesy, SONHS vice dean and professor, gave an overview of this contagious viral infection of the liver.

Vice Dean Clochesy: Hepatitis A usually involves ingesting something contaminated with the feces of an infected person. Vaccination and good hand washing, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing or eating food, are important to decreasing the risk of hepatitis A. The symptoms for adults include fatigue, low appetite, stomach pain, nausea, and jaundice. ... Children under 6 usually do not have symptoms. Most people do recover from hepatitis A. Those who develop complications from hepatitis A often have other health conditions. Those with chronic liver conditions, those whose immune systems are compromised or are traveling to developing countries, men who have sex with men, and those using street drugs should get the hepatitis A vaccine. Vaccination for both

VACCINE VALIDATION

After “vaccine hesitancy” made the World Health Organization’s list of 10 threats to global health in 2019, Dean Cindy L. Munro discussed the risks of this growing reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite vaccine availability.

Dean Munro: Some parents underestimate the value of vaccines in preventing illness, and overestimate the risks of vaccination because of inaccurate information on social media. ... Outbreaks (three or more cases) can occur when vaccination rates are low enough to let the disease spread from person to person. ... People who are not vaccinated are most vulnerable! Some people cannot be vaccinated because of medical problems, like problems with the immune system. Newborns who haven’t yet received vaccinations are vulnerable. The elderly, who may not respond fully to vaccines

hepatitis A and B is recommended for children. While hepatitis A, B, and C are all viral infections of the liver, hepatitis A causes a serious infection that usually resolves on its own within two months. Hepatitis B and C, on the other hand, commonly result in chronic infection of the liver and increase a person’s risk of developing cancer of the liver. Hepatitis B and C are transmitted through blood and body fluids. There is also a vaccine to prevent hepatitis B, and there is now an effective treatment for hepatitis C.

TRACKING HEPATITIS A CASES IN FLORIDA

SOURCE: Florida Dept. Health

2016	122	
2017	276	
2018	548	
2019		(as of November) 2,970

Med Appeal

Pre-Med Simulation Workshop wows aspiring medical students



Torie Cowles, 17, decided to become a physician after witnessing the horrible suffering caused by diseases like Ebola in Africa. “Africa is my home,” she explained. “I want to be able to take care of people.” Cowles was among the 11 super-focused high school and college students enrolled in the School of Nursing and Health Studies’ first-ever Summer Pre-Med Simulation Workshop this past June.

SONHS faculty designed the weeklong program around five study areas: cardiac, central nervous system, emergency medicine, respiratory, and diabetes. Morning lectures fleshing out anatomy and physiology, disease processes, and pharmacology in each area set the stage for daily hands-on activities in the Simulation Hospital, where nurses, physicians, and paramedics taught students to evaluate EKGs, suture wounds, defibrillate and intubate, conduct stroke assessments, administer adult and infant CPR, and more.

Senior lecturer Diego Deleon, an M.D., taught anatomy and physiology. During the emergency medicine curriculum, he explained in detail how specific medications affect the respiratory system through receptor activation. For example, when a bronchodilator such as albuterol is taken, it binds to Beta

2 receptors. In other words, Deleon explained, “it tells the respiratory tract to ‘relax, chill.’ That allows the airway to open.” But albuterol also binds to receptors in the heart that can increase its rate of contraction, which can lead to tachycardia, he added, all factors emergency personnel need to know in a crisis situation.

After lunch, students rotated through different simulation stations. One afternoon, paramedic instructor Steven Castex showed his charges how to start an IV using a high-fidelity simulation manikin with working veins. “The important thing is you want to see the way the vein runs,” he advised. “And make sure you don’t stab yourself with the needle.”

Nearby, emergency medicine resident Matt Dybas demonstrated how to suture wounds before the students tested their own dexterity by sewing up linear lesions on rectangular patches of simulated skin. “Notice the U-shaped curve of the needle,” Dybas instructed. “Pull along the contour. You don’t want to fight it.” All this practice, he continued, leads to that first time “you have a living, breathing person in front of you, and you want to do a good job, and your hand starts shaking... You have to know that you trained, you did the work [to prepare].”

Before her week at SONHS, East Tennessee State junior Tatum Gross was sure she wanted to specialize in emergency medicine, but she says the workshop opened her mind to new specialties, particularly pulmonology. Gross’s interest in medicine is personal. Six years ago, her sister was born with life-threatening respiratory complications requiring significant ongoing care. With the nearest pediatric pulmonologist five hours from their home, Gross hopes to become a doctor to give back in small towns like hers, where the need for specialized care is great. “This entire experience solidified my desire to be a physician,” said Gross.

Like the other students, Lexie Hackman, a high school senior from Boca Raton, left the Pre-Med Simulation Workshop excited for her future. “This program gave me a first-hand, immersive experience that was genuinely unforgettable,” she said. “Not only did I take away an immense amount of knowledge related to the human body, but it helped reaffirm and further foster my interest in pursuing a career in the medical field.”

► **FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT**
Gabrielle Tacher, (305) 284-1246.

Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia

SONHS hosts U.S. mentoring program workshop aimed at diversifying CRNA workforce



On her first attempt, registered nurse Junie Accimé intubated a mannequin using a fiber-optic scope. But it wasn’t her immediate success that was remarkable. It was the fact that she did so surrounded by individuals from diverse ethnic, geographic, and clinical backgrounds. Accimé was one of nearly 200 attendees of the Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia Mentorship Program’s 43rd Diversity CRNA Information Session & Airway Simulation Lab Workshop, held for the first time at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS) this past July.

According to the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists (AANA), 11 percent of this nation’s 54,000 certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) are minorities (African-American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native Indian, and other/non-Caucasian). To further diversify the profession, Diversity in Nurse Anesthesia Mentorship Program (DNAMP) is committed to informing, empowering, and mentoring underserved diverse populations across the country in preparation for successful nurse anesthesia careers. Events like the one at UM offer practical information, skills, and contacts, but also a chance for attendees to meet mentors in the profession they hope to pursue.

Attendees at the SONHS event included a mix of college students, RNs, ICU nurses, MSN-prepared clinicians, and even one precocious 12th grader. SONHS was well represented by current and former students. SRNAs Ramniwas Yadav

and Carlos Moreno participated on the student panel and received recognition for receiving scholarships from the AANA Foundation and Army Nurse Corps Association, respectively. DNAMP alumna Ekelechi Nwanju, D.N.P. ’18, introduced keynote speaker Garry Brydges, president of the AANA, who has noted that the U.S. health care system will increasingly rely on advanced practice nursing professionals, such as CRNAs, to ensure access to extremely safe, cost-effective care for patients.

Juan E. Gonzalez, director of the SONHS Nurse Anesthesia Program, talked about how augmented reality is enabling Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists (SRNAs) at SONHS to experience a simulated operating room setting with any level of complicating factors—an airway fire, for example—programmed into the scenario via specialized goggles. “We follow everything exactly the way you would do it in an operating room,” he explained.

Other speakers included SONHS Dean Cindy L. Munro, DNAMP founder and CEO Wallena Gould, DNAMP president John Bing, and nurse anesthesia program directors from the University of Minnesota, Barry University, and Florida International University.

The student and faculty panels, as well as mock interview sessions were followed by Sunday’s airway simulation lab workshop, which provided hands-on practice with high-tech equipment in the Simulation Hospital. Shayne Hauglum, Ph.D. ’15, assistant professor of clinical, demonstrated the use of ultrasound to help visualize anatomy during upper extremity regional anesthesia techniques. Preceptors also guided participants through nasal intubation, anesthesia blocks, spinal insertions, and other simulated procedures.

Gonzalez took the opportunity to encourage visiting participants to pursue advanced degrees as CRNAs, like the D.N.P. program SONHS launched in 2014. “Find your passion, tell us your story, and dream big,” he urged. “You can do this!”



Award-winning Study Examines Post-ICU Distress in Seniors



Mena, second from right, at RCIF, and below right with mentor Elias

An observational study designed to identify emotional distress in older patients who survive ICU stays earned first-time researcher Suseth Mena, B.S.N. '19, an award in the 2019 Research, Creativity, and Innovation Forum (RCIF). The event, hosted annually by the University of Miami Office of Undergraduate Research and Community Outreach, drew 81 submissions. Mena was chosen as runner up in the Social Sciences group, which included nursing and health studies, international studies, environmental science and policy, exercise and sports sciences, and many other focus areas. Judging criteria included presentation style and quality, plus project significance, originality, and methodology.

At the time, Mena was a senior nursing student completing her last clinical rotation in Jackson's medical ICU and doing post-ICU assessments as a research assistant in Dean Cindy L. Munro's NIH-funded FAVoR (Family Automated Voice Reorientation) study to prevent delirium in mechanically ventilated patients. "We noticed some of these patients would become really overwhelmed or frustrated," Mena recalls. "Some would even cry or just opt to stop the assessment." Seeing their distress got Mena interested in further investigation. Her RCIF submission was titled "Relationships Among Emotional Distress and ICU Clinical Factors in Older ICU Survivors." Her mentor was Maya Elías, a post-doctoral associate at SONHS who studies cognitive issues geriatric patients experience in the ICU environment. She allowed Mena to use her own data to conduct a secondary analysis that assessed, first, emotional distress (depression and anxiety) in older patients recently transferred out of an ICU and, second, whether there are clinical factors associated with the emotional distress, such as cognition, sleep quality, multiple intubations, and delirium.

Mena used assessments from the National Institutes of Health Toolbox Emotion Battery to evaluate depression and anxiety

among 30 subjects ages 65 and older who were functionally independent prior to hospital admission, were mechanically ventilated in the ICU, and had been transferred out of ICU within the past 48 hours. Mena presented the purpose, findings, and conclusion of her research to two judges.

"Older ICU survivors exhibited substantial post-ICU emotional distress, specifically depression and anxiety," reports Mena, adding that the analysis also verified association between clinical factors and the emotional distress. "Nursing interventions targeting these clinical factors (cognition, sleep, delirium, ICU readmissions, multiple reintubations) may have the potential to reduce post-ICU emotional distress."

In April, Mena presented with Elías and Antonio Sanchez, B.S.N. '19, at the Yale University Sleep & Symptom Research Symposium. More recently, Mena passed her NCLEX-RN and is writing a new case study of an 87-year-old ICU survivor with Elías, while continuing her work with FAVoR. "I wasn't expecting to win," she says of UM's research forum, "especially because it was my first poster presentation, but I'm thankful for the opportunity and for the mentorship of Drs. Elías and Munro. This is a good step toward the future."



Courtesy of Office of Undergraduate Research & Community Outreach

Courtesy: Maya Elías

Piloting Latino Research

The second annual Center for Latino Research Opportunities (CLaRO) Summer Training Institute on Latino Health Disparities welcomed 30 early-stage investigators from the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), Miller School of Medicine, College of Arts and Sciences, and School of Education and Human Development, as well as Florida International University. Faculty, post-doctoral associates, and Ph.D. students received interdisciplinary training on key topics, methods, and grant proposal development skills, including epidemiology, intervention development, adaptive clinical trials, implementation science, responsible research conduct, and more. Their week at SONHS included presentations by nationally renowned Latino health disparities researchers from UM, FIU, UPenn, Duke, and Northwestern, among other institutions. CLaRO, an affiliated research center of UM and FIU, is funded by the National Institutes of Health's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities. The NIH approved funding for five of CLaRO's designated pilot research projects, with four more under review. CLaRO's third cohort of pilot grants will be selected in February 2020. Funded pilots include "Development of eHealth intervention prototypes to prevent drug use and sexual risk behaviors among Hispanic adolescents" (PI: Yannine Estrada, UM), "Feasibility and acceptability of the Family Acceptance Project among Hispanic families" (PI: Karina Gattamorta,



SONHS), "Syndemic barriers and facilitators to engagement in HIV-prevention and behavioral health services for Latino MSM in Miami" (PI: Audrey Harkness, UM), "Preventing cardiometabolic disease in HIV-Infected Latino men through a culturally-tailored health promotion intervention" (PI: Daniel Jimenez, UM), "PROGRESO-II: Developing and Pre-testing a PrEP Intervention to Promote Latina Seasonal Farmworkers' Progress in the PrEP Cascade" (Mariano Kanamori, UM).

MEASURES LIBRARY IS MEASURING UP

Researchers at SONHS are working to facilitate research aimed at eliminating health disparities between Latino and non-Latino populations, a goal that is especially relevant in South Florida and other U.S. communities where a sizable proportion of the population speaks Spanish as a primary language. But the paucity of translated health and behavioral health questionnaires commonly used by researchers often means studies pertinent to Latinos exclude non-English speakers.

To address underrepresentation of Spanish- and other non-English-speaking individuals in biomedical and behavioral research, SONHS professor Victoria Behar-Zusman, Ph.D. '86, who serves as director of the Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research: El Centro, created the El Centro Measures Library. This important resource, funded through grants from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, aims to advance capacity for conducting health disparities research by facilitating access to measures translated to Spanish, and to facilitate the use of common measures across studies.

Publicly accessible online since 2016, the library currently contains over 80 measures and continues to expand its repository of instruments using a universal version of the Spanish language appropriate for most Latin American and Caribbean populations. It will soon include measures

translated to Haitian Creole. Measures cover diverse constructs relevant to health disparities research, such as culture-related constructs like acculturation stress and familism, family functioning, and gender and sexuality, and measures for health conditions such as HIV/AIDS, psychological distress, substance use, and trauma. With input from health disparities researchers across the University of Miami, El Centro is broadening its scope of measures, which go through a rigorous background check on the source of the translation.

Analytics show that visits to the Measures Library jumped from 13,000 in 2017 to 36,000 in 2018. Users represent over 25 countries and include doctoral students, medical doctors, and Ph.D.-level researchers, among others. "Repositories such as the El Centro Measures Library represent an essential resource for researchers in the U.S. and, increasingly, throughout the developing world," says Behar-Zusman. "Ultimately, we envision our Measures Library as a go-to resource for the national and international community of scholars from diverse disciplines including nursing, social sciences, and other health professions, conducting research to address health disparities in vulnerable, non-English-speaking populations."

► **VISIT THE EL CENTRO MEASURES LIBRARY:**
<https://elcentro.sonhs.miami.edu/research/measures-library>

Marijuana as Medicine

Uncovering evidence-based truths about the medical benefits of cannabis use

By Maggie Van Dyke

What fascinates Assistant Professor Denise C. Vidot, Ph.D. '15, about marijuana is how little is understood about the drug, despite the fact that cannabis is now legal for recreational use in at least 10 states and for medical purposes in over 30 states, including Florida. "Every time you think you know something about cannabis, there's a whole new cannabinoid that's discovered," she says.

Just a few years ago, Vidot's father was taking a cocktail of medication to fight multiple myeloma cancer and scleroderma, both of which are incurable. After switching to a vegan diet and medically prescribed cannabis, his quality of life improved. "He's a whole new person," says Vidot, who can't help looking at his case scientifically. "It's my duty to find out whether he is an anomaly, or if the medical marijuana is helping him and could help others."

For the past nine years, she has been conducting pioneering research on the physical and mental health outcomes of cannabis use. "My overall goal is to provide this fast-growing field with evidence-based clinical recommendations or warnings, if appropriate, regarding the use of cannabis," she says. "You hear about cannabis in the news almost every day. But the research on cannabis is not developing as rapidly as state laws around legalization." Making her work more urgent, this past spring, Florida expanded its medical marijuana laws to allow smoking medical pot, as well as ingesting it in other ways.

NOT ALL CANNABIS IS EQUAL

One challenge to studying marijuana's health effects is the sheer variety of products. "Not all cannabis is the same," stresses Vidot. The two cannabinoids, or compounds, in marijuana that have been studied most are tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD). THC is a psychoactive ingredient in marijuana that causes a "high" feeling. In contrast, pure CBD is believed to not alter a person's mental state but has been shown to have medicinal properties.

While medical marijuana tends to have high concentrations of CBD and low, if any, concentrations of THC, the drug's exact makeup varies. "Medical marijuana is very diverse depending on state rules, the ailment you're using it for, etc.," Vidot says.

"You hear about cannabis in the news almost every day. But the research is not developing as rapidly as legalization."



"For epilepsy, for example, there's a Charlotte's Web strain that is purposely made with only CBD, but patients who have nausea, such as those with HIV, are given medical marijuana that has THC and CBD, which work together to help nausea."

Further complicating the study of marijuana is the variety of ways people can ingest it. Some smoke it in hand-rolled cigarettes known as joints, water pipes (called bongs), vaporizers, or blunts (hollowed-out cigars). Others drink tea or eat brownies and other foods mixed with cannabis (edibles). "Your route of cannabis administration makes a difference in health outcomes," Vidot says.

GETTING TO THE TRUTH

The majority of Vidot's marijuana-related research focuses on its effect on cardiovascular risk factors and disease outcomes. She and her colleagues have published groundbreaking findings on this topic in major scientific journals, including the *American Journal of Public Health*.

As detailed in a 2016 article in *The American Journal of Medicine*, Vidot, working with University of Miami colleagues, found a link between recreational marijuana use and lower odds of metabolic syndrome. The study of 8,478 adults, ages 20 to 59, was the first to look at this relationship on a population level across adulthood. Among younger adults, current users were 54 percent less likely to present with metabolic syndrome than never users. Middle-age current marijuana users had half the odds. Past marijuana use also provided some protective effect at all ages.

Digging into the data revealed interesting differences in cardiac risk factors as well. Marijuana users tended to have lower waist circumferences and better fasting glucose levels, which contribute to metabolic syndrome. However, systolic blood pressure was higher in current users. "I'm very intrigued to find out why blood pressures are different,"

Vidot says. To explore this and other questions, she recently completed a follow-up study with 50 marijuana users to identify whether the route of cannabis use affects cardiometabolic disease risk. This study also linked marijuana use to lower odds of metabolic syndrome. However, health outcomes differed somewhat between subjects who smoked joints and those who smoked blunts.

Uncovering health effects of different smoking approaches may help address concerns over respiratory and cardiac impact. "Everyone knows that smoking anything is not a good health choice," she says. "But if a patient is going to smoke marijuana, there may be better ways to smoke it than others."

Vidot collected blood and urine samples to assess the concentration of different cannabinoids in subjects' bodies. Most of the subjects only had THC in their systems and no CBD, which makes sense because they were recreational users and not consuming medical marijuana. "My next step is to figure out how CBD impacts cardiometabolic health," Vidot says.



Vidot, above and at right in sunglasses, recently expanded her cannabis research to Jamaica with help from SONHS students. See page 22.

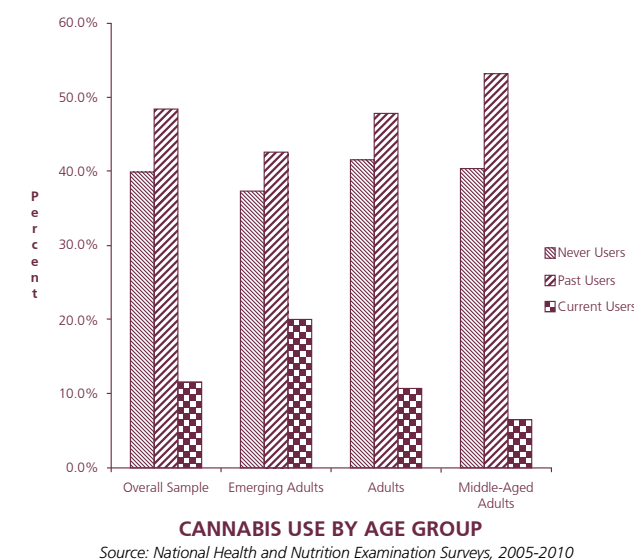


MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTS

Vidot has been examining depression and anxiety prevalence among cannabis users as well. The results of a 50-participant pilot study of cannabis users, many of whom reported daily recreational marijuana use, showed users had six times the prevalence of depression than non-users. On the flip side, cannabis users had lower prevalence of anxiety.

Vidot also measured THC levels in the subjects' blood and urine. "My research is showing ... the more THC in their system, the less anxious they were," she says. This finding conflicts with the generally accepted view that cannabis raises anxiety due to THC's psychoactive profile. Vidot stresses that more research is needed to understand the mental health effects of cannabis.

When it comes to combatting myths and misinformation, she recommends keeping three truisms in mind: "Number one, not all cannabis is the same. Number two, the way you ingest cannabis matters. And number three, dose matters." For anyone interested in learning more about cannabis, Vidot recommends brushing up on the human endocannabinoid system, which produces cannabis-like substances to help the body maintain homeostasis, or equilibrium. "If you understand the endocannabinoid system that's already inside of us," she says, "you'll understand how cannabis interacts with our bodies."



Humanitarian U: The Complexity of Crisis Response

In the first course of its kind on a college campus, SONHS was the scene of a simulated disaster zone designed to educate would-be aid workers

By Robin Shear

They weren't sure what kind of disaster to expect. They just knew havoc and misery would reign somewhere, and they would have to deploy rapidly, carrying only the essentials they'd need to live outside the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), without a proper bed or meal, and limited access to electricity, plumbing, and air conditioning.

These 30 faculty, students, and staff from nursing, medical, and public health willingly entered a simulated disaster zone orchestrated by Humanitarian U, a Montreal-based organization dedicated to training and certifying aid workers all over the world on how to respond to the complex and cumulative effects of disaster. During a stormy weekend in June, dozens of role-playing volunteers helped

Humanitarian U's expert faculty transform SONHS' grounds into "Simlandia," an unstable nation devastated by an avalanche of adverse events.

"Of course, the weather had a mind of its own and wreaked havoc. Simlandia should have been renamed Swamplandia," says Susana Barroso-Fernandez, assistant professor of clinical and director of Simulation Hospital Special Projects at SONHS. Interdisciplinary teams of participants had to set up tents during a very real downpour, face simulated roadblocks and nighttime raids, and maintain their cool amid hostage negotiations and disease outbreaks, food shortages and corrupt officials. Along the way, they were tasked with conducting needs assessments, helping distraught refugees, analyzing data, preparing

budget and service plans, holding mock press conferences, and coordinating humanitarian affairs with the UN.

"This was an amazing weekend of learning, acting, and imagining possible solutions for problems I did not even know could exist," says Juan E. Gonzalez, professor of clinical and Nurse Anesthesia program director. Gonzalez enlisted six family members as Humanitarian U volunteers and took on several roles himself, including paranoid and corrupt customs officer, mood-swinging local warlord, and rock-and-roll-obsessed dictator who hates Americans. "The dictator insisted on supervising all assistance provided to his people to make sure the resources, most of which he'd stolen, got to the 'right' people," he recalls.



Evan Garcia

"We all want to help, but how uncomfortable are you willing and able to be to help? It's better to find out now than when you land in chaos."



Photo by Andrew Ballram

Unlike most of the participants, SONHS employee Jackie Rodriguez had no health care experience, "so I came in with the idea of keeping my head down, my mouth shut, and being a learner," she recalls. "Right away you became so in tune with what you were doing and immersed in the simulation."

It was in the Simulation Hospital, which doubled as a debilitated Simlandian emergency department besieged by power outages and chaos, where Rodriguez, who plans to go to nursing school and perhaps join the military, hit her stride, working with her teammates to assess and triage patients. "During the emergency department scenario," she recounts, "I tended to a kid with a 'missing arm.' When I looked down at my hand, there was 'blood' on it,

and that's when it hit me—that is the kind of thing that's going to happen [in real life]."

The enactments were intentionally intense. The first day, for example, volunteers posing as angry rebels ordered participants from their local transport, made them kneel by a wall, and interrogated them. "We all want to help, but how uncomfortable are you willing and able to be to help? It's better to find out now than when you land in chaos in the middle of nowhere," explains Barroso-Fernandez.

The trainers evaluated participants not only on what they recalled from previously completed education modules but also on how they held up under constant pressure, with little



Robin Shear



sleep in a world shattered by infinite need and unrelenting emergency. “Imagine being stuck in a tent with strangers, having to plan and execute programs, providing security for one another, making food together, struggling through summer Florida thunderstorms,” says participant and future nurse Arianna Hoeppner, B.S.N. ’19, who fully committed to the immersive experience as a former theater major. “I remember crying because I was tired, crying because I was challenged by simulation activities, I was hungry. I hadn’t showered, the list goes on.”

A 10-year veteran of medical missions, nurse anesthetist Nicole Gonzaga Gomez took part in Humanitarian U to gain disaster relief experience. “I don’t think I wrapped my head around it entirely going into it,” she admits. “If you don’t take it seriously or think through the needs of a population—security concerns, transportation issues, even media coverage—you could endanger people’s lives, your own life, or damage the organization.”

Nursing lecturer Goldie Wasman and her 8-year-old granddaughter, Charlotte, volunteered as displaced villagers seeking aid. “This experience opened my eyes to how violent it is becoming to try to provide humanitarian aid,” says Wasman, a veteran RN and midwife. “It’s almost like helping people is a sidebar. You have to worry about who’s going to be killed in the next room or being shaken down.”

Knowing how to protect oneself is an important lesson for an aid worker. In 2017, according to the Aid Worker Security Database, 139 aid workers were killed during attacks on relief efforts conducted in 22 countries. But well-meaning aid workers who are inexperienced and untrained can magnify disaster as well, as emergency responder and physician Kirsten Johnson witnessed after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. The next year she founded Humanitarian U to help professionalize the humanitarian aid workforce. Since then, notes Johnson, the World Health Organization began requiring relevant training for emergency medical team members.

NURSED ON THE SCENE

Humanitarian U medical expert Hilarie Cranmer, an emergency physician at Massachusetts General Hospital and founding director of Disaster Response at MGH’s Center for Global Health, says she was glad to see the integral role SONHS played in Humanitarian U’s first collaboration at UM. “Nursing figures so prominently in humanitarian aid and the next generation of humanitarian workers. The global health teams we deploy are about 80 percent nursing professionals,” Cranmer says.

In a recent evaluation conducted by Stephen McGhee, SONHS associate dean for nursing undergraduate studies, McGhee concluded that access to standardized disaster preparedness and response education in the RN core curriculum “greatly enhanced the key skills of assisting with triage and the ability to work in teams” while improving knowledge and confidence to care for victims effectively.

Prior to Humanitarian U, disaster preparedness has been a core aspect of the SONHS curriculum. SONHS has been coordinating simulated mass-casualty disasters for undergraduate students for over five years. “What we put in these scenarios isn’t far-fetched,” notes Barroso-Fernandez. “Nurses need to be prepared because large-scale disaster will affect all of us in some way, shape, or form. It’s not a matter of if—it’s a matter of when.”

This past spring, she and SONHS public health nursing faculty led some 120 nursing students in a half-day simulation in which a hurricane touches down in Miami, causing chaos at the local aid shelter and a surge of patients to the emergency department. “I was so excited to see UM taking steps to prepare our undergraduate nursing students in being first responders,” says M.S.N. student Rachael Socarras, a Medical

Reserve Corps volunteer who helped facilitate the simulation. “This is further preparing them for the workforce they will be entering as new nurses.”

Collaborating with Humanitarian U proved another step in that direction. Barroso-Fernandez coordinated the effort at SONHS with Miller School of Medicine faculty Antonia Eyssallenne and Elizabeth Greig, both of whom were critical to UM’s emergency response to Haiti in 2010. SONHS and the Miller School’s Gordon Center for Research in Medical Education and Global Institute for Community Health and Development co-sponsored the Humanitarian U course.

The unique nature of the simulation helped nursing student Gianna Falise, B.S.N. ’19, see her teammates from the Miller School in a new light. “I forgot they were doctors,” she says. “It was just people helping people. We used each other’s strengths. We weren’t separated by scrubs and white coats—everyone was wearing ponchos and dirty sneakers.”

Barroso-Fernandez agrees. “This was an excellent opportunity to break down [disciplinary] silos and work with the Gordon Center and the Global Institute,” she says. “Participants had an amazing experience.”

In fact, future nursing student Rodriguez was so inspired that, despite the lack of creature comforts, she admits she almost didn’t want the weekend exercise to end. “The emergency department experience reaffirmed everything I want to do,” she says. “I want to help people at their lowest, scariest moment, to be their sound voice, their calm, and help fix their problem.”

—Additional reporting by Maya Bell



Hemispheric Action Is Here and Now

Connecting the dots that will build capacity for the health care workforce

By Yolanda Mancilla and Robin Shear

Here. Now. Two simple words signaling place and immediacy, an awareness of who we are at this juncture, in this moment. At the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS), these aren't ordinary, everyday words—they are guiding stars as we navigate extraordinary times. They're a call to action. The acronym "HERE" expresses UM President Julio Frenk's vision of a university that is Hemispheric, Excellent, Relevant, and Exemplary. "NOW" embodies the concept of SONHS as a Novel, Optimistic, and World-changing school. Each of these aspirational words holds us to higher standards, but the first and last—*hemispheric* and *world-changing*—remind us we're not alone, that we're accountable to neighbors with whom we share distinct historic, geographic bonds. These words call us to reach across borders and boundaries, to engage, collaborate, learn, and serve.

SONHS has a long trajectory of hemispheric initiatives built on partnerships with schools of nursing, health care professionals, and communities across Latin America and the Caribbean, but these initiatives have never seemed more urgent and relevant than they do now. In recent years, the school has provided health care in remote villages in Haiti; helped build capacity among nursing faculty in Guyana, Brazil, Chile, and Jamaica; and worked with engineering students to help reduce the spread of infectious diseases in Ecuador by connecting homes to town sewage lines.

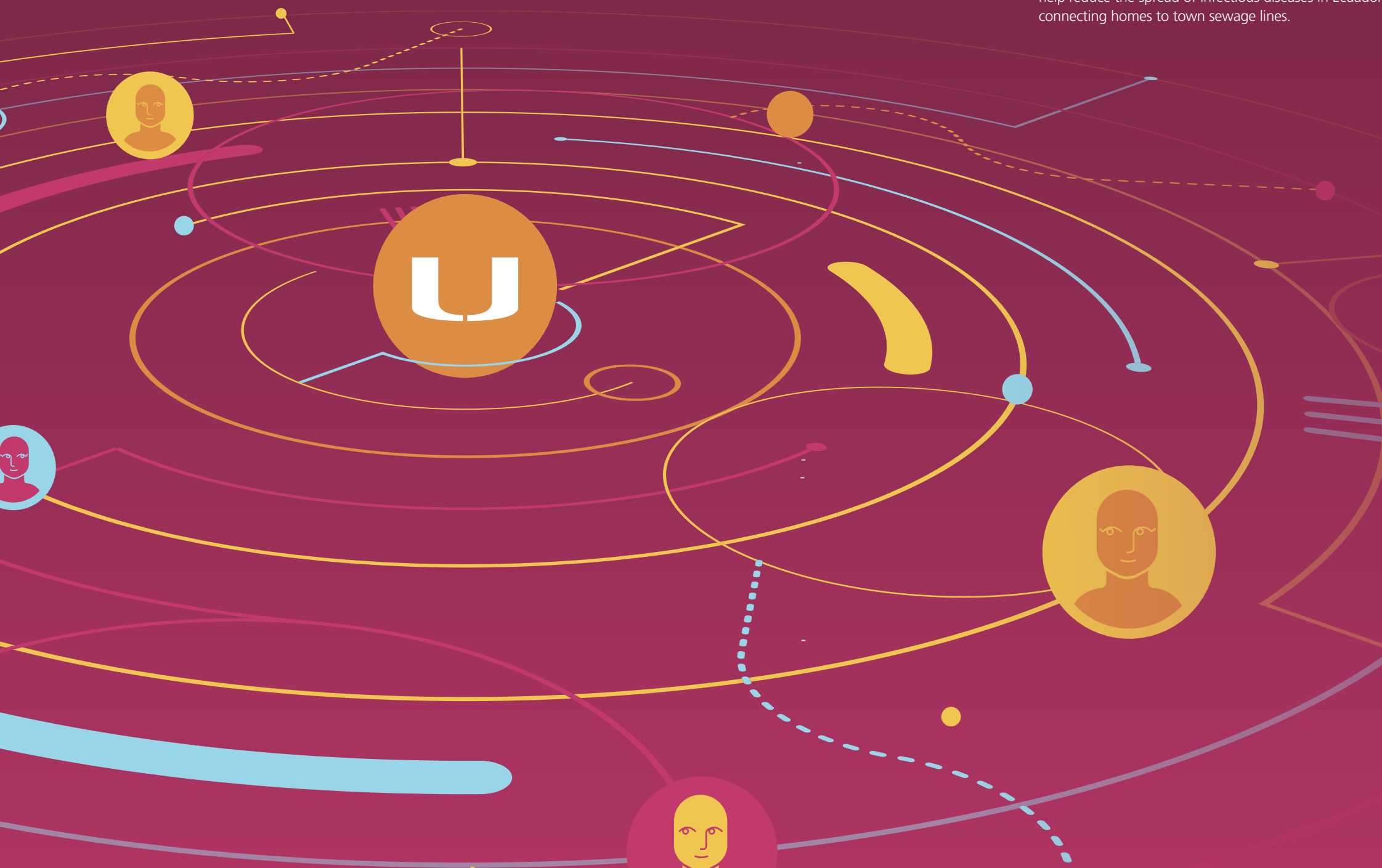
"SONHS is building bridges between South Florida and our neighbors across the hemisphere, one collaborative project at a time."

Through its Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization Collaborating Centre, SONHS has teamed with PAHO partner institutions to improve patient safety and build workforce capacity among nurses and other health care professionals. Beyond clinical and public health initiatives, these efforts extend to research that is expanding hemispheric health knowledge. SONHS Ph.D. nursing students, for example, have completed dissertations on beliefs about cervical cancer and the Pap test among women in Chile, on sociocultural factors and attitudes toward intimate partner violence in Costa Rica, and on health empowerment of pregnant adolescents in the Bahamas. Through a grant from the NIH's Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (see page 24), over 50 SONHS students have participated in global health disparities research across the hemisphere and beyond. And our alumni can be found continuing their explorations as faculty and health professionals at institutions around the world.

As we look toward 2020 and the World Health Organization's first-ever State of the World's Nursing Report, as well as the State of the World's Midwifery Report and World Health Assembly designation of 2020 as the Year of the Nurse and Midwife, SONHS commits to redoubling efforts to increase the number of nurse educators and nurses—as well as public health and other health care professionals—in our hemisphere and worldwide. It is the school's mission to increase the visibility of these professionals and bring greater international attention to their collective impact, both as leaders and as change agents in advancing universal health.

Turn the page for snapshots of projects that have taken us to Jamaica, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and elsewhere in the hemisphere that the school is harnessing technology, simulation, and online education to build capacity for the nursing workforce. These and other efforts support SONHS and UM's hemispheric presence as leaders, learners, and collaborators—a presence underscored by the U's launch of the Hemispheric University Consortium and inauguration of a new regional UM office in Mexico City, with plans to open four more offices in Latin America and the Caribbean.

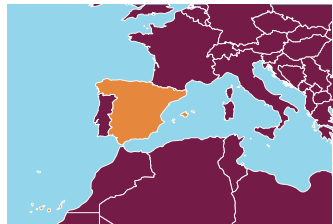
"SONHS is building bridges between South Florida and our neighbors across the hemisphere, one collaborative project at a time," says SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro. *"We're committed to partnering with and learning from each other through initiatives that build capacity among providers, bring needed clinical services to underserved communities, and promote research to reduce health disparities locally and throughout the hemisphere."*



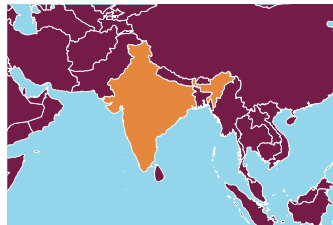
New Paths to Health *in the Americas*

SONHS programs and partnerships in Latin America and the Caribbean include bidirectional exchanges, summer-long research experiences, and immersion courses where students visit public and private hospitals, as well as community centers. Beyond the Western Hemisphere, SONHS collaborates with partners in Australia, Asia, and elsewhere around the globe.

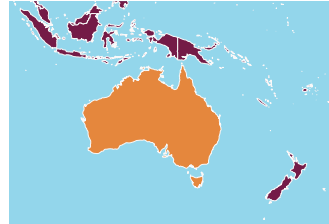
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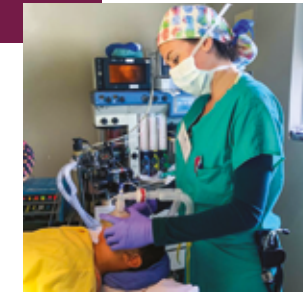
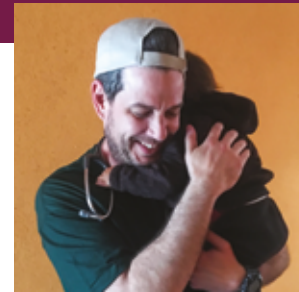
DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Western Hemisphere

South Florida and our Caribbean neighbors face significant risk from hurricanes and sea-level rise. As more large-scale disasters unfold, nurses are increasingly called as first responders and aid workers. Disaster preparedness skills mastered through intensive simulations are readying SONHS students and faculty to deploy to devastated communities anywhere in our hemisphere they may be called to serve. In the wake of Hurricane Dorian, Dean Cindy L. Munro, and Johis Ortega, associate dean for Hemispheric and Global Initiatives, recently traveled to Grand Abaco Island with a delegation led by UM's Board of Trustees to meet with health officials there about next steps for providing health care and more.



Robin Shear



HEALING HANDS

Guatemala

A partnership between SONHS and the Healing Hands Foundation brings Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists to a remote hospital in Patzún, Guatemala, to assist with anesthesia on critical surgeries for patients in medically underserved areas. Nicole A. Gonzaga Gomez, assistant professor of clinical, Nurse Anesthesia Program, launched the effort last year and works alongside students chosen for the week-long mission based on their essays, pediatric clinical evaluations, and interview responses. Three students have been selected to date. The first participant, Viviana Castillo, D.N.P. '18, assisted on some 30 pediatric cases. Representing SONHS this year were third-year student registered nurse anesthetists Morgan Phillips and Jennifer Trock.

SONHS & SOUTHCOM

Guatemala

For the first time ever, SONHS faculty, staff, and nurse practitioner students deployed this summer with the U.S. Army's Beyond the Horizon humanitarian assistance program in Central and South America. Sleeping on army cots and eating MREs, the SONHS team took part in a medical readiness training exercise and provided clinical care to adults and children living in remote, rural villages in Huehuetenango, Guatemala. Residents lined up by the hundreds for an opportunity many in the U.S. take for granted—a physical exam from a health professional. "I am very proud of our students for their global health outreach in Guatemala," says Johis Ortega, associate dean for Hemispheric and Global Initiatives. "The experience provides our students with clinical judgment in an atmosphere outside of the classroom and allows us to contribute to the efforts of the U.S. Southern Command in Latin America."



SERVICE AND EDUCATION

Dominican Republic

Through an ongoing hemispheric initiative in the Dominican Republic, 11 SONHS nurse practitioner students provided clinical services and to helped build capacity among local health care professionals in Los Montones, a rural area in Santiago de los Caballeros in the Dominican Republic. Led by Johis Ortega, associate dean for Hemispheric and Global Initiatives, and Juan M. González, director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program, the students educated the community on proper health care and provided screenings for diabetes mellitus, hypertension, and hyperlipidemia. González and nurse specialist Amauri Quintana also instructed medical residents on using ultrasound for central line insertion. Most recently, SONHS was well represented at the Florida-D.R. Higher Education Summit in Santo Domingo, D.R.



PUBLIC HEALTH RESEARCH

Jamaica

This past summer, Denise Vidot, Ph.D. '15, assistant professor, worked with two public health student mentees in Jamaica to collect data on cannabis use and heart health in rural Jamaicans. The students asked demographic questions and inquired about cannabis use while SONHS nursing students also on site collected health-specific information Vidot needed for her cannabis study, such as cardiovascular history and markers. "It was the definition of interdisciplinary research in action," Vidot says. "The study taught me that good population research requires you to become an active member of the community," says public health student Patricia Emelle, who assisted Vidot. "I learned it's important to get to know the people who live there and understand the issues from their perspectives." The team collected data on 200 primarily older adults, in rural Jamaica. "One of the preconceived notions was, 'Oh, this population's older. They're probably not going to use cannabis.' But it turns out there was actually a high prevalence of cannabis use," she says. While in Jamaica, Emelle also conducted research at UWISON on metabolic syndrome prevalence.



POP-UP MOBILE CLINICS

Jamaica

In a new hemispheric initiative, 14 M.S.N. students, led by Juan M. González, Family Nurse Practitioner program director; Denise C. Vidot, Ph.D. '15, assistant professor; and Amauri Quintana, nurse specialist, set up and staffed mobile health clinics in four rural Jamaican communities, working alongside faculty and students from the University of the West Indies, and local health professionals. "Our relationship with the University of the West Indies School of Nursing (UWISON) is mutually beneficial to our institutions and to hemispheric health," says SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro. The nurse practitioner students provided clinical services for acute and chronic conditions through pop-up clinics in underserved areas. "Participating in SONHS' first mobile clinics in Jamaica reinforced my passion for medicine and belief that we are all our brothers' and sisters' keepers," says Andrea Leiner, M.S.N. '19. Leiner's roommate in Jamaica, Carissa Dobert, M.S.N. '19, adds, "As a nurse, there is no greater pleasure in life than serving others, but this feeling is exponentially magnified when the patients have limited access. Our group provided essential services to hundreds of patients across the lifespan who were extremely motivated and grateful to receive care."



STUDENT EXCHANGES

Chile, Mexico, Spain & Beyond

Eight public health and health science students traveled to Vina del Mar, Chile, over winter break this year with lecturer Diego Deleon, organized by Chile's Universidad Andrés Bello. This year, for the first time, two nurse practitioner M.S.N. students accompanied five B.S.N. students on a study abroad experience in Santiago de Chile, coordinated by Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. Students from Andrés Bello also arrived at SONHS for a two-week observership during which students and faculty experienced U.S. health care systems first-hand. Academic exchanges also take place with institutions elsewhere in Latin America, Australia, and India.

SIMULATION CAPACITY BUILDING

Jamaica



In a Jamaican emergency room, a 7-year-old suffering an asthma attack is not responding to medication. A 55-year-old presents with symptoms of myocardial infarction. An athlete experiences shortness of breath and knee pains. Faculty from the University of the West Indies School of Nursing (UWISON) act quickly to identify relevant symptoms and initiate treatment. They're participating in simulated scenarios they helped create as part of a capacity-building program led by SONHS faculty Ashley Falcon, Cynthia Foronda, Latoya Lewis-Pierre, Johis Ortega, and Kenya Snowden. The team traveled to UWISON in Kingston, Jamaica, this summer to help the institution build its simulation education program, necessary for fulfilling a mandate to double student capacity in the region. Learning to use simulation and debriefing will help UWISON faculty develop their students' clinical and critical thinking skills. The collaboration will advance UWISON toward its goal of having simulation comprise 25 percent of its curriculum in a nation limited by a shortage of varied clinical site placements. "I know simulation will be a very important part of our curriculum and will play a role in increasing the number of students [we graduate]," says Melissa Walker, UWISON's undergraduate nursing program coordinator. "I'm excited to get my foot in the door with this workshop and see how high-fidelity simulation fits in with our undergraduate nursing curriculum." Snowden, Foronda, Lewis-Pierre, and Falcon also presented on simulation advances and classroom technology at the 29th Nursing and Midwifery Research Conference at UWISON's Mona Campus.



WORKING WITH PAHO/WHO

Pan American Region

When the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) convened health department leaders from over a dozen Pan American countries in Miami in July to discuss the nursing and midwifery workforce for 2020, SONHS hosted a networking reception and tour of the school's Simulation Hospital for the group. "We are honored to have so many distinguished guests from the Pan American region here," said SONHS Dean and Professor Cindy L. Munro, who was joined by Lourdes Dieck-Assad, UM vice president for Hemispheric and Global Affairs; Johis Ortega, associate dean for Hemispheric & Global Initiatives at SONHS; and other faculty. Ortega also attended WHO's Collaborating Centre pre-conference meeting and the International Council of Nurses 2019 Congress, "Beyond Healthcare to Health, where he presented the poster "Study Tour and Summer Program, a Contribution to Raise Global Citizens in Nursing: The Perspective of Participants," with colleagues Lilian Ferrer, of Universidad Católica de Chile, and Carlos Masías Valdés, of HESAV in Switzerland.

SONHS is meeting PAHO/WHO objectives in Guyana, South America, through nurse educator training and workforce capacity building. Faculty Deborah Salani and Mary E. McKay presented their poster "Expanding Guyanese Nurse Tutor Competencies in Assessment and Evaluation Methods: A Nurse Education Certificate Program" at Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society's 30th International Nursing Research Congress in Canada this summer.



Tackling Health Disparities Abroad

With its \$1.35 million federal grant renewed, the School of Nursing and Health Studies will continue to help diversify the health sciences workforce of the future, one successful summer at a time.

By Carlos Harrison

For Donna Bean, B.S.N. '15, analyzing the impact of government policy on maternal mortality in Spain turned out to be perfect preparation for addressing tuberculosis among indigenous tribes in Alaska.

The chance to help researchers in Chile develop protocols for a smoking intervention program has inspired Belén Hervera to apply to a master's program in public health.

Ariel Smith, B.S.N. '16, Ph.D. '19, discovered a completely unexpected career path by focusing on health equity among an elderly population with atrial fibrillation in Australia.

Over the past five years, dozens of undergraduate students from the School of Nursing and Health Studies



Smith, left, in Australia, 2015

(SONHS) like Bean, Hervera, and Smith had formative experiences around the world through the Minority Health and Health Disparities International Research Training program, MHIRT. MHIRT emphasizes learning about global health issues and disparities through active involvement and cultural immersion. Toward that end, every summer MHIRT sent 10 to 11 students to foreign health institutions.

"It was amazing because I had never been out of the country and because it was my first introduction to research," recalls Smith, who was in the program's first cohort in 2015. "I learned what research is, what you can do with those skill sets, and it made me extremely interested. When I came back, my mentors said, 'You should apply to the Ph.D. program.'"

Selection for MHIRT was competitive, with only 51 of the 150 SONHS students who applied between 2014 and 2018 chosen. That diverse alumni group included 43 females and 8 males, of which 23 were Hispanic, 21 were black, and 7 were socioeconomically disadvantaged white students.

The program's positive results led the National Institutes of Health/ National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH/NIMHD) to award SONHS a competitive \$1.35 million renewal grant this summer to administer the program for five more years. From 2019 to 2023, another 50 promising applicants from nursing, public health, and health science disciplines will take part in health disparities research training experiences at partner institutions in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Mexico, and Peru. The renewed grant is called the Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training Program (MHRT).

"We are excited to build on the success our students demonstrated in the previous five years," says Johis Ortega, associate dean for Hemispheric and Global Initiatives and the study's Principal Investigator. "We will continue to prepare individuals from diverse backgrounds to conduct health disparities research throughout the hemisphere through hands-on opportunities with internationally renowned researchers focused on



Mentors, 2020

improving minority health and reducing disparities. We look forward to opening the eyes of tomorrow's most promising health disparities scientists to new cultures, populations, and career possibilities."

Smith is a prime example. She worked with scientists Simon Stewart and David Thompson at Australian Catholic University on a study aimed at reducing health disparities in cardiovascular risk among Australian aborigines. "We had 900 aboriginal patients' home addresses and the names of the hospitals where they were assigned

to receive treatment," Smith explains. "We had to create maps and plot out the distance from their homes to the hospitals and their general practitioners' offices, to see if distance from providers is a factor that is limiting their access to health care. This was grueling work, so we got to see the unexciting side of a researcher's life."

The effort made a lasting impact. Back at SONHS, Smith dove into opportunities at the Center of Excellence for Health Disparities Research, where she evaluated the impact of nursing student health

"I fell in love with research. Instead of helping people one-on-one, I'm impacting a wide variety of people, organizations, and systems."



Cohort, 2019



Extrand on Research Day, 2019

fairs on health outcomes and health literacy among high-risk populations, and received prestigious McKnight Doctoral and Jonas Scholar fellowships to support her studies. This past May, she became the first in her family to earn a doctorate degree. Now, after seven years in Miami, Smith is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Illinois at Chicago. "I had never considered a career in research or been exposed to it. MHIRT opened that door," she says. "I fell in love with it. ... Instead of helping people one-on-one, I'm impacting a wide variety of people, organizations, and systems."

MHIRT alumna Bean became familiar with a different culture as a Peace Corps volunteer in Mozambique, but her time at the Universidad de Alicante in Spain

through MHIRT gave her new skills and confidence. Bean, a member of the 2016 cohort, was involved in a study of political epidemiology, "looking at the child mortality rate and how it is linked to governance structures," she says. "I compiled the timeline, literature review, and outline, working with a statistician."

The work helped hone her Excel skills and led to a paper she recently published with her international MHIRT mentors, José Fernández Sáenz, María Teresa Ruiz Cantero, and José Ramón Martínez-Riera. Importantly, the knowledge of epidemiology Bean gained in Spain also proved useful when she was hired as a public health nurse in Alaska, working with community health aides and tribal councils.



Australia, 2018



Exploring Chile, 2019



Australia, 2019



Spain, 2015

"You treat the community as well as the individual, or work with tribal councils to provide education," she explains. Bean spent three years in the southwestern part of the state working with indigenous populations in an area with scarce health care resources and pressing health needs. "I've seen people having strokes, and you have to wait for a LifeMed plane to come from Anchorage while trying to keep somebody alive, but the main disease problem there is tuberculosis. Alaska has the highest rates of tuberculosis in the nation. This is where my epidemiology background with MHIRT helped because I've been giving talks with webinars to provide instruction."

As it did many others, MHIRT motivated Bean's academic ambitions. She is currently pursuing her master's degree in applied epidemiology through the University of Arizona.

Minority health and health disparities research trainees have had the chance to focus on everything from hypertension, cardiovascular risk, and HIV and sex workers, to frailty and well-being of older adults, health care access and practices, and alcohol, gender and domestic violence.

Members of the 2018 cohort, for example, worked with scientists at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile School of Nursing in Santiago de Chile on issues impacting Chilean nursing students, including violence, tobacco, alcohol and drug use, and sleep behaviors. Other mentees traveled to Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in the Dominican Republic to investigate gender differences in electronic cigarette use among college students and the effect of social support on pregnancy outcomes.

At the University of the West Indies School of Nursing, MHIRT trainees investigated health disparities among adult asthma sufferers in Jamaica. "I was able to see the world through new eyes and immerse myself in a culture unlike my own," recalls Herveline Saintil, a nursing student who performed secondary analysis of data from the Jamaica Asthma and Allergies National Prevalence Survey. "This experience is one I treasure and one that will stay with me long and beyond college."

This summer, public health student Elena Extrand participated in a novel qualitative study of perceptions of well-being among Roma women in northern Alicante, Spain. "It's invaluable to be able to go to another country and see how they conduct research, their inter-team dynamics and how they complete every step of the process," she says. The research helped her understand how societal biases can affect access to medical services for minority women.

Extrand is now determined to focus her career on fieldwork that helps other vulnerable women. "There's almost no interaction between the non-Roma and the Roma in Spain, so just having an opportunity to talk to Roma women, to see what they've been going through, was very powerful for me," she says. "I had never done a literature review of publishable quality. There was scarce literature on the subject, so we knew what we were doing was novel and would contribute, but it made the background review a little bit harder."

Also in the 2019 cohort, Belén Hervera says MHIRT gave her the chance to return to the city of her birth, Santiago, Chile, to work with mentors at the Pontificia Universidad Católica on laying groundwork for a smoking intervention program to be implemented in Chilean hospitals. "It made me understand the value of research and its impacts on the health system," says Hervera, who moved to the U.S. at age 8. "It was a tremendous, life-changing experience, both professionally and personally. It can be very difficult for minority students to get into graduate programs, especially the best schools. Now I have the experience and tools to apply to the best programs—and I will." Many other program alumni pursue advanced degrees, which Ortega says is an important step toward meeting the national mandate to build a culturally competent scientific

workforce and end the health disparities that plague socially, economically, and environmentally disadvantaged people across the U.S. and around the world.

"The minority population is increasing in the U.S., and we have a very small percentage of minority nurses prepared to pursue research that can address their issues," says Ortega. "That's why it's one of the main goals of the NIH to expand the number of minorities seeking higher degrees. That's why they have programs like this. Who can understand better the issues of minorities than minority researchers? And who better than public health and nursing students, who are on the frontlines of health care?"

As Dean Cindy L. Munro said when she welcomed the MHIRT Advisory Board to SONHS in September:

"Programs like MHIRT, which foster borderless relationships and forge ongoing research collaborations, are critical to improving health equity and patient outcomes throughout the hemisphere. Repeatedly, we hear how this opportunity changes our students' lives, channeling them into new possibilities and careers they never imagined. As well-trained investigators from health disparity populations, they will be in a position to make a unique impact on the science of eliminating health disparities."

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Chile, 2019



Research Day, 2017



Spain, 2015



Hervera on Research Day, 2019

McDermott Joins SONHS



Donna McDermott joined the School of Nursing and Health Studies in October as associate professor of clinical and assistant dean for simulation programs after nine years at Robert Morris University (RMU) in Pennsylvania, most recently as associate professor and department head for nursing. At RMU, she developed the

standardized patient program, led accreditation efforts in the simulation center, and worked on integrating simulation throughout doctoral and undergraduate curricula. McDermott has presented nationally and internationally on simulation best practices. Her nursing background is in critical care and medical-surgical nursing. Her research focus is in pre-briefing/preparing students for simulation learning and design. She is an active member of the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INACSL) and invited member of the INACSL Standards of Best Practice: Simulation committee, working on revising and developing new standards. McDermott is a Certified Health Care Simulation Educator (CHSE) through the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH) and served as the nurse planner and content development task force member for the Regional SSH-INACSL Simulation Workshops. She holds a B.S.N. from the University of Pittsburgh, an M.S.N. from RMU, and a Ph.D. in nursing from Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

González Recognized



Juan M. González, assistant professor of clinical and director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program, was selected as a 2019-2020 Duke-Johnson & Johnson Nurse Leadership Program Fellow in March. He was also singled out as Outstanding Graduate Program Director for 2019 at the University of Miami Graduate School Annual Awards Ceremony in April. Graduate School Dean Guillermo Prado praised González for directing “the

largest and strongest Master of Science in Nursing program,” revamping its curriculum and rigor, and increasing its simulation opportunities from 0 to 36 hours.

Cianelli Honored



The Florida Education Fund unanimously awarded the 2019 William R. Jones Outstanding Mentor Award to **Rosina Cianelli**, associate professor and director of the M.S.N.-D.N.P. Program, for outstanding contribution to the McKnight Doctoral Fellowship Program. Cianelli received the award during a McKnight Fellows celebration in October. She was nominated by McKnight Doctoral Fellow and SONHS Ph.D. candidate Christine Toledo, M.S.N. '16.

Props for Prather



Susan L. Prather, associate professor of clinical, was a recipient of the 2019 University of Miami Excellence in Civic Engagement Faculty Award. She was chosen for helping her public health nursing students understand their professional and social responsibilities to the communities in which they work by facilitating successful service-learning experiences with Camillus House, a nonprofit assistance center for poor and homeless people in Miami.

Spring 2019 Faculty Awards



In the SONHS Spring 2019 Awards voted on by students, **Mary McKay**, B.S.N. '88, D.N.P. '09, associate professor of clinical and director of undergraduate clinical partnerships, received Teacher of the Year, and **Philip Dlugasch**, an Acute Care Nurse Practitioner at Jackson Health System, was named Clinical Excellence Faculty of the Year.



Innovating Education for Caregivers

Growing up in Wisconsin, Cynthia Foronda showed an early aptitude for health care, tending to her first patient, a pet poodle, at age 4. A family friend who was a nurse further captivated her imagination. “She would come by our house after a shift in the emergency department, and she’d have amazing stories,” recalls Foronda, as an associate professor of clinical here at SONHS. “It sounded exciting, and I just wanted to help people.”

While studying nursing on a volleyball scholarship to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Foronda began exploring areas in which she is now making her mark as a nurse scientist. She began accompanying a young man she met at VCU (now her husband) to his native Bolivia, where she encountered cultural health practices and beliefs that intrigued her and challenged her assumptions about the primacy of Western medicine. Soon immersed in Latin American culture, Foronda learned about the power of folk customs, the sense of *familismo* (familialism), and a personal, team-oriented approach to health care. “I saw that we could learn from each other,” she says.

Her quest to know more about other cultures led to a master’s thesis on health beliefs and practices of Mexican American mothers, while a transcultural nursing course she taught in Ecuador laid groundwork for her doctoral dissertation. Foronda’s clinical career as a pediatric nurse informed her interest in the broader concept of cultural humility, which recognizes power imbalances between patients and providers prevalent in health care dynamics.

“Cultural humility is a process of openness, self-awareness, being egoless,” she explains. “It enables better communication by recognizing and appreciating differences, and establishing a partnership with families we’re working with as clinicians.”

A recent paper Foronda coauthored, for example, aims to determine the main elements of cultural sensitivity for pediatric nursing in Iran. She wants her students to grasp the importance



of knowing about various ethnicities, cultures, genders, and other diversity characteristics as part of their practice. “We want people to feel they are on the horizontal plane of being equally valued,” she says.

As an assistant professor at Johns Hopkins University, Foronda developed another career-defining expertise—integrating virtual simulation in nursing education. Today she employs creative tools like 3-D immersive computer applications to introduce students to clinical experiences. Coming full circle, she is finding ways to blend virtual simulation pedagogy with cultural awareness capacities. For one such project involving low-income, minority participants in South Florida, Foronda aims to see if teaching family caregivers of children with asthma how to use medications and treatment equipment properly improves at-home care and health outcomes. “Asthma affects 1 in 11 children in the U.S., and is the number one cause of preventable emergency room visits,” she says. “We hope to close a gap in the health

care system by improving family caregiver education.”

In 2018, the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation identified Foronda as a promising educational innovator, choosing her asthma caregiver education proposal for a competitive educational change award. “The award has transformed my teaching,” says Foronda. “Now I have the support and resources to implement new models of clinical education designed to advance caregiver education, an often-overlooked aspect of our health care system, and improve the lives of chronically ill children in vulnerable populations within our community.”

The current president of the International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning, Foronda is advocating for diversity and championing engaging, active teaching techniques to keep nursing on the rise. “Helping nurses on the front lines, helping to develop future nurse leaders, and helping the discipline at a health systems level,” she says. “That’s what I want to be about.”

June 2018 – May 2019

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1950s & 1960s

Ann Marie McCrystal, B.S.N. '59, was elected to another four-year term on the Indian River County District Board of Trustees, a taxing body for indigent care in the community, and is serving again as chair of the Visiting Nurse Association of the Treasure Coast.

Ruth Samad, B.S.N. '69, is a psychologist in private practice in California. She also runs a continuing education company providing online courses for mental health professionals. Samad earned her Ph.D. in psychology from Emory University and most recently taught at San Diego State University (2001-2015).

1970s & 1980s

Ann M. Thrailkill, C.N.P. '76, has been a nurse practitioner at the VA hospital in Palo Alto, California, for 34 years. She adds that she is maternity coordinator for all of their sites, and does compensation and pension exams on women veterans for disabilities.

Richard K. Pepe, B.S.N. '78, co-founder of a software company that developed an Anesthesia App, is retired after almost 40 years in nursing. He lives in Connecticut with his wife of 35 years and two championship-bred miniature schnauzers. "I truly believe my B.S.N. from the U gave me a leg up," he writes. He has made many trips with a group that brought ORs to the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, and Bolivia and wrote the bill for legislation that eventually created the HAVEN program for health professionals.

Shirley Ryan, B.S.N. '79, is retired in Southern California but actively volunteers in various hospital departments, including maternity and PACU.

Mary E. Asher, M.S.N. '85, D.N.P. '11, teaches leadership and management as an adjunct assistant clinical professor at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Deanne Silvers Donato, B.S.N. '89, reports that her son Zachary graduated in the inaugural class of the University of Miami's Master's in Bio Med Science program and her younger son, Noah, recently started college at Nova Southeastern University.

1990s & 2000s

Balkys Bivins, B.S.N. '95, M.S.N. '97, earned her Ph.D. in nursing at Barry University. She received a Sigma Lambda Chi research grant for her study on the lived experience of Haitian American women with type 2 diabetes mellitus and has published and presented internationally with Sigma on the significance of culturally tailored nursing care. Her new research addresses culture and health care. She teaches in the SONHS B.S.N. program and Nova Southeastern's APRN program. Bivins continues her practice in internal medicine, concentrating on diabetes management.

Joyce E. McClintock, Ph.D. '97, published a political thriller, *The Iranian Plot*, a sequel to *The Russian Plot*, on Amazon Kindle.

From the SONHS Alumni Board

Carmen Sierra, BSN '96
President, SONHS Alumni Association



Dear alumni community:

On behalf of the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies Alumni Association, I would like to express our excitement for the 2019-2020 academic year. This past summer our board held

its annual retreat and discussed at length various initiatives planned for the coming year intended to engage our SONHS alumni community.

First and foremost, 2020 will signify the first-ever Year of the Nurse and the Midwife, in celebration of what would have been Florence Nightingale's 200th birthday. Every year, but this year in particular, we will be hosting events to celebrate nurses and health care professionals. The association will again participate in the UM-sponsored effort known as P.R.I.D.E., which stands for Professional Awards and Social Networking, Recruiting Student and Scholarship, Ibis Sports Programming, Devotion to Community, and Education for Alumni. We will be developing programs in these five areas that will help expand our SONHS community and diversify engagement across multiple areas for our 7,000-plus-member SONHS Alumni Association.

Be on the lookout for more information about upcoming SONHS Alumni Association events!

I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Go 'Canes!

Jadine Louissaint, B.S.N. '05, says she is "super excited to represent 'Canes nursing" in the Haitian American Chamber of Commerce of Florida "Top 20 Under 40" Class of 2019 for South Florida's Top Young Haitian-American Professionals. She is a clinical resource coordinator overseeing Jackson Health System's medical/surgical clinical resource management team at and the executive director of a faith-based mentorship program for young women.

Durrell Darrow Handwerger, B.S.N. '09, is a board-certified holistic nurse practitioner. After eight years as an acute care nurse at University of Miami Hospital, he obtained his Family Nurse Practitioner degree and board certification from the American Holistic Nursing Association. He is now at South Florida Integrative Health Center, a primary care provider focused on improving chronic disease outcomes.

2010s

Debbie Anglade, M.S.N. '10, Ph.D. '14, SONHS assistant professor, was a Jonas Nursing and Veterans Healthcare "Scholar Spotlight" for National Nurses Week 2019.

Hope M. Williamson-Younce, D.N.P. '10, was named commander of the 627th Hospital Center in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Kim Hires, Ph.D. '12, released two books this year: *Leadership Innovation Manifesto* and *Canaries in Coal Mines: Millennials in Toxic Work Environments*. She is founder and CEO of The Nightingale Firm, LLC, and is a certified coach, speaker, and trainer with The John Maxwell Team. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia, with her husband and son.

Stacy (Steinberg) Livingstone, M.S.N. '14, welcomed baby Juliet Maya in June. Big brother Tristan, 2, is enjoying his new sister.

Willie Joseph, B.S.P.H. '15, has an M.B.A. from UM and is a doctoral candidate in public health at the Miller School of Medicine.

Erin Pacheco, B.S.N. '16, specializes in Neuro ICU in West Palm Beach, Florida. She passed her CCRN certification and plans to attend graduate school. On a recent medical mission to Cusco, Peru, she helped in the emergency department of a salud (rural hospital), making gauze and cotton balls, suturing wounds, and even aiding in a delivery.

Brittany Price, D.N.P. '16, and Julius Johnson, D.N.P. '16, founded Dr. Nurses, a consulting, education, networking, and collaborative mentoring platform for future "Dr. Nurses."

Jason Hamrick, B.S.N. '18, works in the intensive care recovery unit at Erlanger Health System and is pursuing his M.S.N. in psychiatric/mental health at Vanderbilt University. He is grateful to SONHS for wonderful professors and clinical opportunities.

Amanda Castro, B.S.N. '19, was accepted to a competitive internship position in the PICU at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago, Illinois.

Lila De Tantillo, Ph.D. '19, successfully defended her dissertation, "A Pilot Randomized Trial of a Medication Possession Intervention to Improve Medication Adherence and Health Outcomes of Patients with Heart Failure After Hospital Discharge." She is now an assistant professor of nursing at Jacksonville University and was lead author of "Organ Donation after Circulatory Death and Before Death: Ethical Questions and Nursing Implications, published in *Policy, Politics & Nursing Practice*.

Iron Arrow: Cachay Byrd

Cachay Byrd stood out long before being tapped into Iron Arrow, UM's highest honor, in Spring 2019. The once shy, introverted kid from Liberty City transformed into an academic powerhouse after joining the Breakthrough Miami academic enrichment program as a 5th grader. Now a senior in the pre-nursing track at SONHS, Cachay plans to become a nurse practitioner midwife. A Gates Millennium Scholar, she earned a Ronald A. Hammond Scholarship to attend the University of Miami, a place where she instantly felt "like I had a part in a community," she said. In addition to Breakthrough, she credits her mother's unwavering drive for her success. Byrd recalls being challenged by Mandarin class in junior high, but her mother wouldn't let her quit. By high school, Byrd had won a state-level competition for Mandarin in the native speaker category. Last year, she completed an immersive study program in Shanghai. Back at UM, she remains involved in the Butler Center for Service & Leadership, the Homecoming Executive Committee, the Committee on Student Organizations, and Breakthrough Miami's College Bound program. "I have a passion for advocating for others as I believe everyone should have a voice," said Byrd, who wants to get her master's in nursing and a Ph.D. with a focus on specialty populations. Ultimately, she would like to open a network of birthing centers. "I believe in the provision of a holistic approach to women and reproductive health," says Byrd. "We have so many advances in health care now, yet women are still dying when they give birth, and to me that is unacceptable."



Compassionate Close Up



Adrian Mesa, D.N.P. '18, a senior lecturer at SONHS, had his photography exhibited for the first time this summer. His portrait, "Gina," was on view at the Coral Gables Museum as part of The Compassion Project (thecompassionprojectmiami.com), curated by Starr Sariago. Photographers were paired with clients from LEAP, a program for women transitioning from prison. "Our job was to get to know them and photograph them," says Mesa.

After speaking with Gina a few times, he visited her at home, where she lived with her mother. "We hung out in her living room and just discussed life. She told me about her upbringing, her inability to 'fit in.'" About two months later, Mesa learned Gina overdosed. "Her mother sobbed in my arms when she saw the portrait of her daughter in a museum," recalls Mesa, a family and psychiatric nurse practitioner whose recent scholarly work is focused on immersing students in curbside interventions and outreach to improve care for homeless clients.

'Moving Past the Hashtag'

In 2017, thousands of women began sharing their stories of sexual assault and harassment via the #MeToo movement. As a result, widespread recognition of this issue swept across the internet and spurred social activists to motion. But how does a social media movement advance toward real change? That was one of the key questions public health majors **Kristine Reynardus, B.S.P.H. '19**, and **Evelyn Mangold, B.S.P.H. '19**, addressed in their 2019 TEDxUMiami talk, titled "Moving Past the Hashtag." Now on YouTube, the presentation has about 1,500 views.

► **WATCH IT AT:** <https://bit.ly/2ltrenm>



2010s Continued

Anna Marshall, B.S.P.H. '19, self-published an e-book titled Food Marshall: Savory Recipes, featuring 40 healthy, plant-based recipes.

Emmanuel Ojukwu, Ph.D. '19, successfully defended her dissertation, "Social Determinants of Engagement in HIV Treatment among Black Postpartum Women Living with HIV."

Isabella Sarabia, B.S.N. '19, accepted a position in the neonatal intensive care unit at Greenville Memorial Children's Hospital and will move to South Carolina to start their nurse residency program.

Alexandra Stathas, B.S.N. '19, was hired as part of the new grad program at UMass Memorial Medical Center, where she works in the NICU and postpartum units.

Jamie Zimmerman, B.S.P.H. '19, is pursuing an M.P.H. at George Washington University with an interest in adolescent health disparities. He helped YES Institute in Miami, his senior practicum site, raise over \$1,300 for suicide and bullying prevention programs by connecting the nonprofit with gaming streamer Hutch, who encouraged his fans to donate.

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Building a Healthy Community

Triple alumna leads health department for one of largest counties in the U.S.

A dedicated champion for the health and well-being of individuals in her community, Yesenia D. Villalta, B.S.N. '99, M.S.N. '03, D.N.P. '13, made a seamless transition last January to her new role as administrator for the Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County (DOH-Miami-Dade). The 14-year department veteran, most recently as nursing director, knew the challenges that lay ahead and was eager to swing into action.

Within three months, Villalta implemented a new strategic plan, and, with her team, tackled a top priority: training DOH-Miami-Dade's more than 750 employees on prevention and preparedness to respond to natural and manmade disasters. She is tasked with developing and implementing health programs and policies that benefit Miami-Dade's 2.7 million residents and nearly 16 million annual visitors. Her formidable agenda ranges from addressing the opioid crisis and HIV prevention to increasing immunizations against childhood diseases and raising awareness of the negative effects of e-cigarettes and vaping.

Villalta first became convinced of the impact she could have as a public health advocate as an undergraduate at SONHS, when she conducted home visits for her community health nursing class. She gained further insights during clinical rotations in the DOH-Miami-Dade's family planning and sexually transmitted disease programs while earning her master's degree. For her D.N.P. scholarly project at SONHS, Villalta secured funding to establish a colposcopy clinic to serve uninsured women who faced long waits—up to six months—for follow-up care after an abnormal pap test. The clinic she spearheaded still operates today.

After two years in private practice, Villalta returned to the DOH-Miami-Dade as a provider in a family planning clinic. This experience revealed some of the challenges medical professionals in



this setting face and prepared Villalta for one of her key responsibilities as head administrator: allocating the department's resources to areas with the greatest need. To that end, her department recently conducted a well-being survey to identify community needs and invited various agencies and organizations to the table to discuss how to address pressing issues. "Federal funding is decreasing and fewer grants are available, so it's important for our agency to provide efficient and effective services," says Villalta. "By pooling resources and sharing best practices, we can maximize our productivity and ensure that we have a culture of quality improvement and excellence."

Villalta's alma mater continues to serve as a key partner and an important resource for the DOH, as it did when she was a student, placing nursing

students in clinical rotations and public health students in internships within DOH-Miami-Dade facilities. "I love the School of Nursing and Health Studies and I love the University," she says. "They provided a great foundation and gave me the tools I needed to be a well-rounded professional."

Lillian Rivera, Villalta's predecessor as head of DOH-Miami-Dade, understands just how tough the job is. "We are on call 24/7 for the protection of the community," she says. But she sleeps soundly with Villalta in charge. "Dr. Villalta loves her community, she loves what she is doing, and she has many years of experience," notes Rivera. "I am extremely proud of her, and I know she will build on what we did and take it to places I never imagined with her energetic style and leadership."

Making the Case for Health Care



To Bishara Randolph (BSPH '22), leadership came naturally. As a young man, he often helped his parents, a lawyer and a doctor, by watching his younger brother and sister or taking them to school. Growing up black in a predominantly white suburb of Detroit, Randolph faced prejudice and discrimination on a number of occasions. That instilled in him a desire to serve his community by helping his peers to "be comfortable with their identity and with the identities of other people around them," he says.

Now a sophomore majoring in public health and minoring in Business Law and Health Sector Management and Policy, Randolph is one of just two Stamps Scholars currently enrolled at the School of Nursing and Health Studies (SONHS). The University of Miami's prestigious merit scholarship and leadership program covers the full cost of attendance for four years. Randolph is also president of the UM Mock Trial Team, engaging in legal trial simulations in competition with teams from other schools across the nation, and is on the UM Student Government Elections Commission.

"The way I was raised, watching my parents work hard, that stuck with me," says the 19-year-old. "I like to live my life by seeking out challenges, by being busy and involved. I always look for opportunities that will present more opportunities."

Whether sports, essays, math problems, or volunteer work outside of school, Randolph has always excelled. He stepped into leadership roles in various clubs throughout high school, including as a founding member of a ministry to befriend and support the homeless in downtown Detroit. Randolph says he always "loved to argue," and envisioned practicing law like his father. But he loved health and medicine, too, like his mother.

Last year, Randolph realized there was a way for him to combine both interests at SONHS. After studying Health Sector Management and Policy and Epidemiology, he grew determined to focus on public health and health disparities.

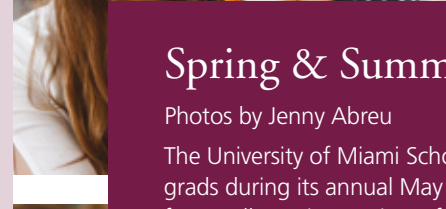
He now plans to go to law school to study medical malpractice. In addition to a J.D., he also intends to pursue a Master of Public Health degree. "I'm passionate about both areas, especially about helping people navigate the law and changing the law to help people in certain communities," he says.

Last year, when Randolph's grandfather died of stage IV stomach cancer while an inmate of a state penitentiary, another passion emerged: health care in the criminal justice system. "My family was shocked by his death," he says of his grandfather, who was also an attorney. "He had access to health care, including extra care, which the family paid for each month. Yet his cancer was overlooked until it was too late. It gave me even more of a drive to make a difference when I graduate."

For now, Randolph is enjoying his public health classes, "diving deeper into things I just knew a little about and being able to connect more dots," he says. In the Spring, he took part in the Professional Development Academy: Healthcare Edition at SONHS, a nine-week intensive program designed to help students develop knowledge and skills for career readiness and success. He spent the summer as an intern paired with an attorney at the Washtenaw County Office of Public Defender in Ann Arbor, Michigan. And he's preparing for a busy mock trial season.

Randolph also enjoys spending time with his cohort of Stamps Scholars, who represent a broad range of disciplines from biology to human and social development. "Everybody has something unique about them," he says of his Stamps peers. All of them share the goal to be leaders in the community.

"Meeting all those people with different leadership styles has motivated me to be an even better leader," he continues. "It reminds me what I'm at college for: to get things done."



Spring & Summer 2019 Commencement

Photos by Jenny Abreu

The University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies celebrated the hard work and achievements of over 350 new grads during its annual May and August awards ceremonies. Faculty and clinical partners recognized 19 students individually for excellence in a variety of academic, clinical, and community performance categories. SONHS congratulates these newly minted alumni as they continue their journey to transform lives and health care through education, research, innovation, and service across the hemisphere. Go 'Canes!





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