

2021 CAPAC Summer Student Testimonials

CAPAC Program: 10-weeks



Adián Rodríguez
Lorenzo

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Edna Mora, MD, MS, FACS

UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Medicine & UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Archived Formalin-Fixed Paraffin Embedded (FFPE) Breast Cancer Samples Showed High Quality Morphological and Histological Characteristics After Long

Term Storage.

Testimonial: ***"I am not the same person who entered the program 10 weeks ago, I have had exponential personal and professional growth. Thanks a million for allowing me to participate in this program. Keep up the exceptional work you have been doing thus far!"***

Institution: Georgetown University, Washington DC, US

Mentor: Guillermo Armaíz, Ph.D.

Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Summer Project: Access to care as a contributing factor to underlying disparities in Hispanic women with ovarian cancer in the United States.

Testimonial: ***"Was definitely a great experience. I believe that my time during the program was extremely beneficial, as I was able to develop and***



Claudia Schiavo
Sánchez

employ so many different skills that will be necessary in my career. I realized that I enjoy research a lot more than I thought I would."



Daniel Santiago Negrón

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Pharmacy, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Magaly Martinez, Ph.D.
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Pharmacy & UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: "Detection of Andrographolide using LC-MS/MS"

Testimonial: *"The experience was extraordinary, I was able to improve my ability to communicate in English, meet people from other places, improve my research area and increase my knowledge of cancer in general."*

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Karen Ortiz-Ortiz, MA, MPH, DrPH
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Characterizing Emergency Department Visits among Patients with Cancer in Puerto Rico: A population-based study.

Testimonial: *"The CAPAC program is an excellent opportunity to conduct research that involves and directly impacts Puerto Ricans. Having the opportunity to conduct this type of rigorous research while being in Puerto Rico is absolutely amazing and it will hopefully pave the way for more of these types of programs on the Island."*



Francelis Báez Caraballo

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Mirza Rivera Lugo, MS, MT



Gabriela López Toledo

UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Knowledge and Attitudes of a sample of Latinx LGBTQ population regarding cancer screening, prevention, and barriers: an exploratory study.

Testimonial: ***“Amazing networking and research experience learned a lot about cancer prevention research and would definitely recommend it.”***

Institution: Penn State College of Medicine, Hershey, Pennsylvania, US

Mentor: Vivian Colón-López, Ph.D., MPH
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Understanding views against the HPV vaccine school-entry requirement in Puerto Rico.

Testimonial: ***“The CAPAC program provided a once in a lifetime opportunity for me to participate in a novel research project in the field of cancer health disparities. I added new skills to my public health toolbox and more importantly expanded my professional network, all while experiencing the beautiful people of Puerto Rico. Because of the program, I’ve become a more confident researcher.”***



Gloriany Rivas



Jennifer Acevedo Rodríguez

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Pharmacy, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Magaly Martínez, Ph.D.
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Pharmacy & UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Validation of Estrogen and Notch Signaling Pathways in HPV Associated Penile Cancer

Testimonial: *“The CAPAC program is an excellent hands on resource to be exposed to cancer”*

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus,
School of Pharmacy, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Carlos Torres, Ph.D.
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of
Medicine, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Understanding the Role of
Mitochondrial DNA Repair in Maintaining
Bioenergetics in HepG2 Liver Cancer Cells.



Jesús Sosa Rivera

Testimonial: *“For the past 10 years, I have been working in the laboratory-research setting as an undergraduate and later as a graduate student. I joined the 2021 CAPAC research training program as a recent graduate with a master’s degree in pharmaceutical sciences. The learn and experiences that I had this summer are key to build the track of the next step in my academic journey that is the Pharmacy School. At this point, I am leaving Puerto Rico, but I have a compromised to help the Hispanic communities in my new place.”*



Joel J. Colón Torres

Institution: San Juan Bautista School of
Medicine, Caguas, PR

Mentor: Nawal Boukli, Ph.D.
Universidad Central del Caribe, Bayamón, PR

Summer Project: ER stress driven response in
HIV-1 gp120 glioma cells.

Testimonial: *“Excellent research program for students directed to the field of science and health. Excellent mentors with perfect opportunities to grow professionally and stand out from other candidates when applying to graduate schools or residencies.”*

Institution: Belmont University, College of Pharmacy, Nashville, Tennessee, US

Mentor: Elsa Pedro, PharmD, BCPS
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Pharmacy & UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Evaluation of Opioids Administration Timing: A pilot Study

Testimonial: ***“Very good experience and very useful.”***



*Krystal Butler
Fernández*



*McClaren Renee
Rodríguez*

Institution: University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Public Health, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US

Mentor: Cynthia Pérez, Ph.D.
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health

Summer Project: Influence of health beliefs on COVID-19 vaccination among patients with cancer and other comorbidities in Puerto Rico

Testimonial: ***“An excellent opportunity to strengthen skills pertaining to population-based research and to experience the cultural aspect of Puerto Rico, and how it has an effect on the health of the residents.”***

Institution: UPR Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Brenda Soto, Ph.D.
Ponce Health Sciences University, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Barriers to Cancer Screening Tests in People Seeking Gender-Based Violence Shelter Services in Puerto Rico: A Pilot Study

Testimonial: ***“The CAPAC Research Training Program 2021 summer internship was an opportunity to participate and learn about the research processes and scientific collaboration. I also had the joy of meeting and working with several exceptional Puerto Rican***



*Melisa Ramos
Sepúlveda*

scientists, as well as students who I know will make significant contributions to the future of the country.”



Pamela Merheb-Finianos

Institution: Universidad Central del Caribe, Bayamón, PR

Mentor: Stephanie Dorta, Ph.D.
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Medicine & UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Human Papillomavirus Positive Oropharyngeal Cancer Cells Modulate B Cell Functions

Testimonial: *“The CAPAC program has really confirmed my interest in Cancer Research and Prevention. It met all my expectations by providing me an amazing, heartwarming experience that has helped me develop my professional skills further. It also impacted my personal life by introducing me to the reality of cancer disparities in the Hispanic community and providing me networking opportunities that will continue to help me throughout my career. I have made great friends, met excellent mentors, and participated alongside a great community that I know I will cherish for life. I will always be incredibly grateful for the opportunity!”*

Institution: Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, New Orleans, Louisiana, US

Mentor: Angel Mauricio Mayor, MD, MSc
Universidad Central del Caribe, Bayamón, PR

Summer Project: Cancer burden in a Hispanic cohort of persons living with HIV: 1992-2017

Testimonial: *“Loved the program and the data analysis skills I gained!”*



Pranav Menon



Samantha Monteiro
Arocho

Institution: Penn State College of Medicine,
Hershey, PA, US

Mentor: Josefina Romaguera, MD, MPH
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of
Medicine, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: HPV awareness and
knowledge among women attending
colposcopy/gynecology clinics in Puerto Rico

Testimonial: ***“CAPAC really allowed me to really delve deep into HPV and allowed me to leave this research program ready to educate my friends and family. I am so excited to continue participating in HPV research in the future to reduce the health disparities that affect many!”***

Institution: Ponce Health Sciences University,
Ponce, PR

Mentor: Pedro Santiago, Ph.D.

Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Summer Project: Functional Characterizations
of CD9 as Biomarker for Discrimination
Between Indolent and Aggressive Prostate
Cancer.



Swizel Tevenal Báez

Testimonial: ***“The CAPAC program provided a space of professional and personal growth. I had the opportunity of meeting students from different cultural, ethnic and academical backgrounds who will most certainly become my future colleges. In regard to hands-on lab work, I was able to perfect basic techniques and learn many methodological approaches that gave me a new perspective towards research work. I was able to work in an interdisciplinary environment where everyone’s academical preparations were meaningful regardless of the specializing field. Furthermore, I was mentored and supported all the way from writing to presenting my own work, findings, and conclusions. I was able to be involved in data analysis where my thoughts and opinions had a meaning. In conclusion, it was a unique and enriching experience that surpassed my expectations.”***



Tatiana Matos Gascot

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Pharmacy, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Suranganie Dharmawardhane, Ph.D. UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Medicine, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Derivatives of MBQ-167 as Inhibitors of Metastatic Breast Cancer

Testimonial: ***“The CAPAC program helps me with my scientific communication skills and my knowledge in cancer control and disparities.”***

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Medicine, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Abel Baerga, Ph.D. UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Medicine, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Selection of Monoclonal Antibodies for the Detection of the Bacterial Uropathogenic Specific Protein in Human Samples.

Testimonial: ***“CAPAC was a great opportunity for many reasons. I got to meet and interact with students of my campus while working on a program designed to promote cancer research here in PR. To me, PR has so much talent and research to give the world that I am thankful to be a part of a program that promotes this.”***



Valeria Toro-Díaz



Valeria Valentín Rosa

Institution: Boston University School of Public Health, Boston, Massachusetts, US

Mentor: María González-Pons, Ph.D. UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Host-Genetic Susceptibility to COVID-19 Symptom Severity and Pandemic-Related Stressors

Testimonial: ***“The CAPAC program was a great opportunity to develop research techniques and knowledge in cancer control and cancer health disparities. It was incredibly***

motivating and humbling to see and be part of the research that will contribute to better health outcomes in the future.”

CAPAC Program: 15-weeks

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Pablo Méndez, Ph.D.

UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Stressors that affected gynecological cancer patients in Puerto Rico during and after Hurricane María: A geospatial analysis.



Camila Elías Arroyo

Testimonial: *“I’m proud of myself for taking this wonderful opportunity. It definitely was hard work, but at the end of the day, all that matters is creating positive impacts on vulnerable populations, such as people suffering from cancer.”*



Dari Goldman

Institution: CUNY Graduate School of Public Health, NY, US

Mentor: Melissa Marzán, DrPH, MPH, CPH
Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Summer Project: Facilitators and Barriers to HPV vaccination among Young Latino Men who have Sex with Men: A Systematic Review.

Testimonial: *“The CAPAC program allowed me to deepen my understanding of the myriad of health disparities that exist amongst Hispanic/Latino cultures, and ways in which I can utilize my research skills to improve the health outcomes of populations.”*

Institution: Inter American University of Puerto Rico, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Filipa Godoy, Ph.D.
UPR Medical Sciences Campus, School of Medicine, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Differential Microbiota of HPV and Non-HPV related Penile Cancer.

Testimonial: ***“Excellent experience for those who are unsure if they want to pursue a career in cancer research. I really enjoyed learning not only about my research area (microbiome), but to also see a epidemiological and public health perspective of this disease.”***



Frances Vázquez
Sánchez



Hannah Van Wyk

Institution: University of Michigan School of Public Health, Ann Harbor, Michigan, US

Mentor: Josué Pérez-Santiago, Ph.D
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: HPV-induced fusion genes in head and neck cancers.

Testimonial: ***“CAPAC offers a unique experience to participate in high level research and at the same time collaborate with peers with career goals and training across a wide range of disciplines!”***

Institution: University of Michigan School of Public Health, Ann Harbor, Michigan, US

Mentor: Ana Patricia Ortiz, Ph.D., MPH
University of Puerto Rico Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Association of Smoking with Anal High-Risk HPV Infection and High-Grade Anal Squamous Intraepithelial Lesions

Testimonial: ***“Being a part of the CAPAC program this summer has shaped and defined my career path. I was able to gain hands-on experience in various areas and had***



Kandyce Keller

the opportunity to be mentored by an amazing team of researchers. This has increased my passion and confidence in pursuing a long-term career in cancer prevention research. I would highly recommend the program to anyone interested in getting hands-on experience and connecting with amazing researchers.”



Tariz Viera Rojas

Institution: UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR
Mentor: Marievelisse Soto-Salgado, DrPH, MS UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center & UPR Medical Sciences Campus, Graduate School of Public Health, San Juan, PR
Summer Project: Risk prediction model for anal high-grade squamous intraepithelial lesions (HSIL) in persons living with HIV in

Puerto Rico.

Testimonial: *“CAPAC meant seeing public health research in action and it gave me the confidence that research is not just about analyzing data for the sake of analyzing data or publishing, but to provide answers to real life problems through science. My mentorship experience was excellent, and I met some truly wonderful people who I still communicate with.”*

Emergencias

Sala de Emergencias Oncológicas
(24 horas, 7 días de la semana)

Para citas e información sobre los servicios del Hospital
(787) 936-1477
o escriba a citas@cccupr.org (<mailto:citas@cccupr.org>)

Para citas del Centro de Radioterapia
(787) 772-8300 Ext. 8301, 8302
o escriba a refereridosradioterapia@cccupr.org
(<mailto:refereridosradioterapia@cccupr.org>)

Enlaces

- Calendario de Actividades(/calendario-de-actividades)
- Sobre el Cáncer(<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer>)
- Empleos(<https://www.cccupr.org/category/empleos/>)
- Contáctenos(<https://www.cccupr.org/contactenos/>)
- Aviso Legal(<https://www.cccupr.org/contactenos/aviso-legal/>)

Cualquier ciudadano puede informar sobre irregularidades en el uso de fondos públicos o que puedan representar el delito de fraude o actos de corrupción pública. Envíe un correo electrónico a informa@oig.pr.gov o presente su queja a través de **www.oig.pr.gov/informa** (**<http://www.oig.pr.gov/informa>**). También puede comunicarse con la línea confidencial de la Oficina del Inspector General (OIG) al 787-679-7979. El denunciante está protegido por ley contra represalias por presentar una queja.