

2023 CAPAC Summer Trainees' Testimonials

CAPAC Program Participation: 10 weeks



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/alondra-rivera-capac2023.png>)

Alondra A. Rivera Raíces, BS

Institution: Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce PR

Mentor: Alixida Ramos Pibernus, PhD
Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Summer Project: Exploring the Perceptions of Latinx Transgender and Nonbinary Individuals Towards Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening.

Testimonial: “Participating in the Cancer Prevention and Control (CAPAC) program was a transformative experience. The program provided me with invaluable training, mentorship, and resources to delve into cancer research, particularly focusing on the Latinx transgender and nonbinary community. Working collaboratively with experts and fellow trainees in a supportive environment allowed me to contribute meaningfully to addressing disparities in cancer screening and prevention. CAPAC has equipped me with the knowledge and skills to make a lasting impact in the field of cancer care.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/anelisse-dominicci-capac2023.png>)

Anelisse Dominicci Maura, BS

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Medical Science Campus, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Ana Patricia Ortiz, PhD/ Filipa Godoy Vitorino, PhD
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center & UPR Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Prevalence and of Anal HPV Infection in Women Attending a Gynecology and Colposcopy Clinic: Assessing the potential impact of HPV vaccination.

Testimonial: “This internship encouraged me to improve and build my confidence level. It gave me a chance to apply the education and knowledge that I learned and gained from my college, to a real project. It helped me strengthen my professional skills and to polish my ability to progress to the next stage of my career path without any doubt or without any hesitation. I’m confident that I’m going to pursue a career in cancer research, this experience helped me realize this.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/angelica-carrion-capac2023.png>)

Angélica M. Carrión Vega, BS

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

Mentor: Carlos A. Torres Ramos, PhD
University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: OPA1 Protein Levels After a Genotoxic Insult in the Human Hepatoma Cell Line HepG2

Testimonial: “It was excellent. It provided me with all the tools necessary to succeed and continue cancer research. Will recommend to my peers.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/carlos-sola-capac2023.png>)

Carlos A. Solá Morla, BS

Institution: Universidad Central del Caribe, Bayamón, PR

Mentor: Josué Pérez, PhD
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: The Role of the Oral Microbiome and Short-Chain Fatty Acids in Oral HPV Infection Among People with HIV

Testimonial: “I am very satisfied with my experience in the CAPAC program and will recommend and promote it to other peers.”

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Campus, Mayagüez, PR

Mentor: Yamixa Delgado, PhD
San Juan Bautista School of Medicine, Caguas, PR



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Carlos G. García Cortés, MS

Summer Project: Unraveling the Influence of Pentacyclic Triterpenes' Structure-Activity Relationship on Non-Small Lung Adenocarcinoma Cells

Testimonial: "Fue una gran experiencia, donde pude aprender nuevas técnicas de investigación, realizar "networking" y conocer sobre la investigación del cáncer en Puerto Rico."



([https://www.cccupr.org/wp-](https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/celeste-charchalac-capac2023.png)

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Celeste M. Charchalac, MPH

Institution: University of Illinois, Chicago, Illinois, US

Mentor: Edna Acosta Pérez, PhD

University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus

Summer Project: The Role of Social Network and Provider Support on Access to Health Care in Puerto Rico and US Virgin Islands Gynecological Cancer Patients Post-Hurricanes Irma and Maria

Testimonial: "Thanks to the CAPAC program, I received a complete support system that enabled me to enhance my skills and education. Through this experience, I have been able to pinpoint areas of research that I would like to further explore and develop."



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Daniela del C. Bernardo Silva, BS

Institution: Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Mentor: Stephanie M. Dorta Estremera, PhD
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Exploring Potential Therapeutic Effects of Streptococcus Salivarius to Target Oropharyngeal Cancer Cells.

Testimonial: “During my 10 weeks at the CAPAC training program, I realized I love research and hope to continue being involved in it throughout my career as a physician. My mentor was extremely encouraging and crucial during this process. I would recommend this experience, without a doubt.”



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Elizabeth R. Tapia, MPH

Institution: University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California, US

Mentor: Josefina Romaguera, MD
University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Elucidating the Relationship Between Vaginal Microbiome Composition and Body Mass Index Among Women in Puerto Rico.

Testimonial: “My CAPAC experience allowed me to use the tools learned in my MPH program and apply them to a practical research setting. I was able to take my interests in reproductive and sexual health and combine them with a new field, microbiology, that I did not have prior experience in. It was a wonderful experience to explore a topic I was interested in through a new research lens with the guidance of my mentor! It expanded my view of public health and allowed me to feel knowledgeable about a new topic!”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/gabriel-de-jesus-capac2023.png>)

Gabriel E. De Jesús Astacio, BS

Institution: Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR.

Mentors: Elba V. Caraballo, PhD/Hilmaris Centeno, MS
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Differential Gene Expression of Potential Colorectal Cancer Biomarkers in Hispanic Individuals

Testimonial: “The CAPAC Program was an excellent opportunity to further develop my interest in cancer research. I am grateful for the relationships, knowledge, and experiences acquired. I experienced first-hand the amazing work being carried out by Puerto Rican scientists whose contributions have a direct impact on our Hispanic population.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/jasmine-contreras-capac2023.png>)

Jasmine Contreras Santini, BS

Institution: Universidad Central del Caribe, Bayamón, PR.

Mentor: Suranganie Dharmawardhane, PhD

University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Expression and activity of Rac, Cdc42, and their downstream effector PAK in Puerto Rican pancreas cancer patients.

Testimonial: “My time in the CAPAC program has been an incredible experience. Working in research has not only helped me develop and strengthen my skills, but it has also boosted my confidence in this area. I am truly grateful for the opportunities and knowledge gained through this program, which will undoubtedly shape my future endeavors.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/jimena-alvarez-capac2023.png>)

Jimena Álvarez Pérez, BS

Institution: University of California, Los Angeles, California, US

Mentor: Pablo A. Méndez Lázaro, PhD

University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Assessing the Impact of Extreme Climate Weather Events on Cancer Patients in Puerto Rico: A Cross-Sectional Study

Testimonial: “CAPAC was transformative. It boosted my confidence as a researcher and in pursuing a career in cancer health disparities. I grasped the value of a multidisciplinary collaborative approach. The program allowed me to immerse myself in the life and culture of Puerto Rico, and also understand critical health disparities people face.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/jose-chevere-capac2023.png>)

José R. Chevere Reyes, BS

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Elsa Pedro Gutierrez, PharmD
University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Reasons for regimen modifications of antineoplastic agents in an outpatient oncology clinic.

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program has helped me grow as a future healthcare professional and understand the role that a pharmacist may serve in developing cancer research, especially as it pertains to Hispanic populations. I am glad to have been able to participate in the program and hope to carry the knowledge and skills that I have gained into any future tasks, as I know they will prove invaluable.”

Institution: University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, US



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Maite A. Zapata Ortiz, MPH

Mentor: Julie Dutil, PhD

UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: The Puerto Rico Breast Cancer Genetics and Genomics Study (PUR-BCGG) Study

Testimonial: “CAPAC is a unique summer-long mentorship experience which allows for the reinforcing of skills of interest, such as health communication, education, and data analysis. Moreover, this program serves as a bridge to connect students with researchers who are conducting cutting-edge studies in cancer within the context of Puerto Rico.” I highly recommend it to those interested in networking and realizing hands-on work within health disparities research!



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Marieli Ruiz Cortés, BS

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Eliud Hernández, PhD

University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Synthesis of Alpha Amino Acetamide Carbazole Derivative and its Biological Evaluation in Cancer Cells

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program provided a nurturing environment that facilitated both my personal and professional growth. Through this transformative experience, I was encouraged to step out of my comfort zone and embrace new challenges.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/marileana-rodriguez-capac2023.png>)

Marileana Rodríguez Ruiz, BS

Institution: Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Mentor: Edna Mora, MD
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Preliminary Qualitative and Quantitative Quality Measurements on Biobank’s Activities

Testimonial: “Mi experiencia en CAPAC ha sido una muy enriquecedora. Me siento muy afortunada de haber podido participar de este programa donde aprendí mucho y el me brindó nuevas oportunidades para mi desarrollo profesional.”

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

Mentor: Esther A. Peterson, PhD/ Josué Pérez Santiago, PhD
University of Puerto Rico Río Piedras Campus & UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: The Effects of Short Chain Fatty Acids on Inflammatory Triple Negative Breast Cancer Cell Line SUM149



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/mikaela-rios-capac2023.png>)

Mikaela Ríos Colón, BS

Testimonial: “The program really helped me feel more secure that I wanted to do research for the rest of my career.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/samantha-verganza-capac2023.png>)

Samantha Verganza, MPH

Institution: University of Southern California, Los Ángeles, California, US

Mentor: Karen J. Ortiz Ortiz, DrPH
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Evaluating the impact of major events on colorectal cancer incidence in Puerto Rico: An interrupted time-series analysis

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program was an excellent opportunity to continue to expand my research skills and knowledge of cancer disparities in Hispanic communities. I enjoyed being part of an interdisciplinary team using our strengths to address health disparities impacting cancer incidence and the cancer care continuum in Puerto Rico. It was a unique and enriching experience I will cherish personally and professionally.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/taymaraliz-santos-capac2023.png>)

Taymaraliz Santos Colón, BS

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Medical Science Campus, San Juan, PR

Mentor: María del Mar González Pons, PhD

Summer Project: Host-Genetic Susceptibility to Colorectal Adenomas and COVID-19

Testimonial: “Grateful to the program for such a wonderful opportunity. It is my first research experience focused on cancer prevention and control and it has reaffirmed my interest in continuing to do research in this area. Without a doubt, the CAPAC program has contributed to my professional growth.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/veronica-rodriguez-capac2023.png>)

Verónica C. Rodríguez De León, BS

Institution: University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US

Mentor: Marievelisse Soto Salgado, DrPH, MS

Summer Project: Barriers Identified by Healthcare Professionals Concerning the Participation of People Living with HIV in HPV-Related Cancer Trials in Puerto Rico

Testimonial: “During my ten weeks at the UPRCCC, I had an incredible experience with excellent support from research staff and mentors. I met a lot of interesting people from various fields. I was able to recruit patients for clinical trials, create and present a poster in Puerto Rico and, very soon, in Florida, and I am currently working on a manuscript. I’m extremely grateful for this experience because it has allowed me to improve my skills, gain experience, and grow.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/zainab-goawala-capac2023.png>)

Zainab A. Goawala, BA

Institution: University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US

Mentor: Keimari Méndez, MD
University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Attitudes Toward Anal Cancer and Screening Among People Living with HIV in Puerto Rico and Their Association with Educational Attainment

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program provided me with the chance to apply my epidemiological skills to cancer research, which was an incredible opportunity. Collaborating with people from different disciplines on abstracts and manuscripts was an invaluable experience that helped me become an effective communicator and a better researcher.”

CAPAC Program Participation: 15 weeks

Institution: Universidad Autónoma de Guadalajara School of Medicine, Guadalajara, MX



([https://www.cccupr.org/wp-](https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/diana-mankin-capac2023.png)

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Diane L. Mankin Cruz, MD

Mentor: Abel Baerga Ortiz, PhD

University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Physicochemical characterization of Outer Membrane Vesicles from pks+ E. coli strains

Testimonial: “Applying to the CAPAC Program was one of the best decisions of my life. CAPAC gave me the opportunity of performing Colorectal Cancer Control and Prevention Research here in Puerto Rico and to reaffirm my interest in clinical research. I learned a lot about current research projects ongoing on the island, had the opportunity of doing networking and I created a bond with health care professionals, now colleagues, that I know despite the distance, we will be there through the years helping and supporting each other out in our professional careers.”



([https://www.cccupr.org/wp-](https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/diego-rodriguez-capac2023.png)

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Diego S. Rodríguez Santiago, BS

Institution: University of Medicine and Health Sciences, St. Kitts & Nevis

Mentor: Marcia Cruz Correa, MD, PhD, AGAF, FASGE/ Ingrid Montes, PhD
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Association of Gut Bacterial Genes with Colorectal Neoplasia in Lynch Syndrome Patients

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program offered me an excellent experience in research, cancer control, and prevention. It also allowed me to expand my network with fellow trainees from different professional backgrounds (from medicine, pharmacy, public health, etc.). I loved every minute of the 15-week program.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/jesennia-bonilla-capac2023.png>)

Jesennia Bonilla Liriano, BS

Institution: Inter American University of Puerto Rico, Fajardo, PR

Mentor: Pablo E. Vivas-Mejía, PhD
UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Understanding the biological role of MMP16 in cisplatin resistance in ovarian cancer

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program fulfilled my experience providing me with the skills to conduct outstanding cancer research. Increased my networking interactions. Also, I had an amazing mentor and support team that enriched my research experience. Lastly, defined better my professional and academic career.”

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Medical Science Campus, San Juan, PR



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/leonel-perez-capac2023.png>)

Leonel Pérez Urbina, BS

Mentor: Abiel Roche Lima, PhD

University of Puerto Rico Medical Science Campus, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Exploratory Study to Identify Conditions Associated with Hispanic Breast Cancer Patients Using Machine Learning Methods

Testimonial: “This program helped me improve my research skills even further for a future PhD. I would recommend it to other interested students.”



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/orlando-castro-capac2023.png>)

Name: *Orlando Castro Ortiz, BS*

Institution: University of Puerto Rico Medical Science Campus, San Juan, PR

Mentor: Magaly Martinez Ferrer, PhD

UPR Comprehensive Cancer Center, San Juan, PR

Summer Project: Differential Microbiota Composition Associated with Head and Neck Cancers and HPV Infections

Testimonial: “The CAPAC program helped me to improve my skills in the research area and gave me the opportunity to do networking with other colleagues in the area of research and health.”

CAPAC Program’s Peer-to-Peer Mentor



(<https://www.cccupr.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/swizel-tevenal-capac2023.png>)

Swizel M. Tevenal Baez, BS (Peer to Peer-Mentor)

Institution: Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce PR

Mentors: Melissa Marzán Rodríguez, DrPH/Pedro Santiago, PhD
Ponce Health Sciences University, Ponce, PR

Primary Project: Machismo Attitudes as a Barrier for Prostate Cancer Screening in PR

Secondary Project: Phosphorylation of retinoblastoma at S249 and cadherin switch as biomarkers of indolent and aggressive prostate cancer

Testimonial: “There is no amount of words that can describe the gratitude I feel for being part of this amazing program. As the 2023 peer-to-peer mentor, I had the opportunity to strengthen my leadership and communication skills, broaden networking connections, become an experienced editor for abstracts and elevator pitches, and finally yet importantly, increase my overall knowledge in cancer research. The CAPAC program enables students to have hands-on research experience and provides seminars to increase knowledge in different areas of cancer prevention and control. Great experience!”

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>**)

Mapa

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.

