

Envisioning Change In Health Disparities Research



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Dr. Victoria Sánchez has had a long-standing interest in health disparities and social inequalities affecting ethnic minorities across New Mexico. Her first research project, while in high school, was to learn if and how people experienced racism in their daily lives. She borrowed her family's cassette recorder and Super8 movie camera, drove to Albuquerque's south valley, approached people on the street and asked them about their experiences with racism. As she looks back on the experience she is amazed that anyone agreed to talk to her, and is moved that people were so gracious and open in sharing their experiences. She is equally amazed that some of her classmates didn't believe the "data".

Seeing social work as a vehicle for social change, she received her BA in Social Work from New Mexico Highlands University. Even then, her interest in research was growing as well as her focus on health disparities as a lens to both articulate and challenge inequality at multiple levels. She went on to earn her MPH at UC Berkeley in community health education and her Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill where she refined her skills in participatory planning and evaluation processes. She is now an Assistant Professor in the Public Health Program (PHP) where she teaches social and behavioral sciences courses and directs the Community Health Concentration.

Dr. Sánchez has been Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigator (Co-I) on several multi-disciplinary research teams. She has been working since 2009 with community and university research partners in a participatory research project in a northern NM school district. The policy implementation study has been funded in different stages by the RWJF Health Policy Center at UNM and the College of Nursing/RWJF Nursing and Health Policy Collaborative.

She was also Co-I on Dr. Lisa Cacari Stone's NIH-funded study on hypertension in Latinos in southern New Mexico.

At the NM CARES Health Disparities Center Dr. Sánchez has two main roles. As a member of the Research Core, she is leading the Center's internal evaluation that includes developing a database to document the scholarly work of NM CARES HD researchers. In another role, she is Co-I on an alcohol and opioid screening and brief treatment study in primary care settings. She is encouraged that decreasing health disparities and improving health and social equity are explicit goals of a growing number of researchers.

A key goal of NM CARES HD vision is to assemble a group of critical, independent investigators, working together to establish a sustainable center of excellence to reduce health disparities and increase health equity. The Research Core, directed by Drs. Steve Verney and Robert Rhyne, work to support Center researchers and community investigators and their collaborators to conduct research on translation and health disparities in New Mexico's communities.

To this end, the Research Core offers technical assistance services and consultation funds to help new investigators develop health disparities research proposals. University investigators may request these resources through a two-page application available on the NM CARES HD website (see below).

For more information about the NM CARES Health Disparities Center, our Speaker Series, Research Resources, and/or the Undergraduate Student Pipeline, please contact Miria Kano at mkano@salud.unm.edu, at 505-272-3876, or check out the links below.

Links:

NM CARES Health Disparities Center:
<http://hsc.unm.edu/programs/nmcareshd/index.shtml>