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SAVE THE DATE

Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference
The Westin Copley Place Boston
Friday, April 3 and Saturday, April 4, 2020
Conference highlights and description can be found [here](#).

New England Science Symposium
The Joseph B. Martin Conference Center at Harvard Medical School
Sunday, April 5, 2020
Click [here](#) for more information or to register.

Evening of Hope
The Westin Copley Place Boston
Thursday, May 14, 2020
Click [here](#) for more information or to donate.

REMINDER

Please remember to update your contact information at www.bscp.org.
Click on "Update Contact Information" and enter your information in the appropriate window.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD, director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), will be the keynote speaker at the 15th biennial Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference on Saturday, April 4. Pérez-Stable will also receive the H. Richard Nesson, MD Award, "in recognition of his commitment to excellence through diversity and leadership in expanding academic and career opportunities to all." The Cuban-born physician, who came to the NIH from the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) in September 2015, says he was inspired from a young age by his father, a physician first in Cuba, then the United States.

Born in Havana, Pérez-Stable moved to the United States in 1960 with his grandparents and sister, when he was eight years old. His parents and younger siblings followed nine months later. His father, who had been in private practice in Havana, initially found work in a lab in Pittsburgh. Once he received his medical license, he spent his career as a physician in the Veterans' Administration system.

"I learned English and had my immigrant experience in Pittsburgh," Pérez-Stable says. In 1967 his father was transferred, and the family moved to Miami. He spent his teens, and attended college and medical school there. "Medical school was always on my mind," he says. "I wasn't forced to do it. I was good in sciences." In school, Pérez-Stable gravitated toward political activities, particularly those involving Latin America and Cuba. Once he began medical school, he says, "I loved the clinical side of medicine and talking to people."

Pérez-Stable did his residency in internal medicine at UCSF, where, he says, "I grew



Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD

into the joy and challenges of being a primary care general internist." Two-thirds of the way through his second year of residency, Pérez-Stable heard about an internal medicine fellowship. Until then he had not done much lab work and describes the fellowship as "a route of discovery." During the time of his research fellowship, he had an opportunity to work in the tuberculosis clinic at San Francisco General Hospital, focusing on the public health aspect of medicine. Pérez-Stable also started a project studying cultural and linguistic factors in the care of Latino patients. His resultant belief that clinicians' ability to communicate with patients in their native language improved care led to much of his later work.

Once he completed the fellowship, the physician joined the faculty of the UCSF, where he remained for 32 years. An internist who provided primary care and supervised residents, he eventually became chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine and director of the Center for Aging in Diverse Communities, the latter funded by NIH's National Institute on Aging.

In the 1980s Pérez-Stable received a grant from the National Cancer Institute to study tobacco use among minority populations, especially Latinos. "Once I got the grant, it

became part of [my] identity," he says. He led research on Latino tobacco policy in the United States and Latin America, addressing clinical and prevention issues in cancer screening. Over the years, his research interests also included improving the health of minorities and underserved populations, improving cross-cultural communication among clinicians and promoting diversity in the biomedical field. He also co-founded and was director of the UCSF Medical Effectiveness Research Center for Diverse Populations, which addresses issues for African Americans, Asians and Latinos in the areas of cancer, cardiovascular disease, aging and reproductive health. The Center also attracts and mentors minority faculty and fellows.

In 2010, Pérez-Stable was asked to join the National Advisory Council for the National Institute on Aging (NIA) at the NIH. He served on the council for four years and came to appreciate the intellectual depth, hard work and dedication of scientific staff at the NIH. When the founding NIMHD director announced his retirement in 2014, Pérez-Stable says colleagues encouraged him to apply. "After being on the NIA Council, I decided to do it," he says, drawn by the "opportunity to influence the field" and the "national stage to impact something I care passionately about. Because I'm at NIH, people listen."

While he admits that it was not easy to leave a job and a place he loved — "I

miss the ocean and I miss patients" — Pérez-Stable is very happy in his current role. "It brought me back to politics and relating to social issues much more directly," he says.

The April Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference will be Pérez-Stable's first BSCP event. He advises students to focus on humanism, passion and ethics. "If you're embarking on a career in research, be sure to get your project finished, no matter how mundane," he says. "Always consider saying yes because you never know when an opportunity becomes a life-changing game changer." Finally, "Be generous. Help other people. We are only as good as those that follow us." ■

WHERE ARE THEY NOW

Ugonna Ijeoma, MD

Ugonna Ijeoma, MD, says she knew she wanted to study medicine from the time she was a young girl. Born in New York to Nigerian parents, she and her family moved to Lagos when she was four because the bank her father worked for transferred him to a subsidiary there. She attended primary and high school in Nigeria but came to the United States for college and medical school. Today she is a physician/medical officer in the Division of Global HIV and TB at the Center for Global Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

While Ugonna was studying biology and infectious disease in high school, the HIV epidemic in her country was growing. A few years earlier a man from her hometown had become sick. His once frequent visits tapered off until he stopped coming at all. The last time she saw him, Ugonna remembers, "He looked very sick." But nobody in the community would discuss what was going on. During the height of the epidemic, when she saw images of HIV patients on television, Ugonna made the connection to her neighbor and figured out what had killed him. While that experience did not lead directly to her current work, it made a lifelong impression.

Ugonna attended Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut, because her mother had a friend who lived in the town and her mother also liked that the school was Catholic. While Ugonna says she loved college, it was an adjustment. She majored in biology and says, "As a minority and a woman, it was really hard to be at a liberal arts school that was not as strong in the sciences. It made me grow up very quickly ... made me find my own way."

Happily, in her junior year she found her way to BSCP, which she learned about during an internship at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). She attended her first New England Science Symposium in 2005, followed by several more and several Biomedical Science Careers Student Conferences. She received a Hope Scholarship in 2010.

"BSCP changed my life," Ugonna says simply. "At Sacred Heart most people did not look like me. To go from that world to a room where almost everybody looks like me — I was blown away." On top of that, she noted, "All these people are doing what I want to do." She still has friends she met at her first conferences.

Ugonna spent two years between college and medical school at HSPH, working on the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). It was "the best opportunity, experience of my life so far," she says. She graduated from University of Connecticut School of Medicine in 2012. In 2009, she received the Arnold Gold Research Fellowship to conduct research focused on the rise of the HIV epidemic in Nigerian youth, traveling to her home country twice. During her third year of medical school HSPH asked her to help with the transition of the Harvard PEPFAR Nigeria program. She returned to Nigeria for a month and a half. "I knew I wanted to do global health — HIV, malaria, immunization," she says.

In her current job, Ugonna has achieved her goal of combining clinical practice and public health. She sees patients at the Atlanta VA Medical Center and studies issues related to global HIV and TB. Because Nigeria is one of her "portfolio countries," she is able to go home frequently.

Juggling her job, international travel and an infant daughter (born in April 2019), Ugonna is still connected to BSCP. She has served as a mentor since 2014 and will return to Boston for the April 2020 Conference. ■



Ugonna Ijeoma, MD

LINKEDIN AND TWITTER

The Biomedical Science Careers Program (BSCP) has recently expanded its presence on social media to better connect with students/fellow participants, highlight available research/internship/job opportunities and celebrate the successes of the organization.

Follow us and join the conversation!



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TIPS ON PRESENTING YOUR RESEARCH

On Friday, April 3 Giorgio Giatsidis, MD, PhD, an assistant professor in the Division of Plastic Surgery at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, will participate in a panel at the 15th biennial Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference on “How to Write an Abstract and Present a Poster.” Giatsidis has been a poster judge at the New England Science Symposium three times.

“When you have done scientific work, it’s always good to share it,” Giatsidis says. “Sharing is a pillar of scientific advancement.” He breaks down the three primary means of doing this as publication, oral presentations and poster presentations. The goal, he says, is to get feedback and advance research, adding that anyone at any stage of his or her career should consider it.

Generally, poster presentations are done early in people’s careers, including when they are students. They are easier to do in a less stressful environment. And, he says, making posters helps researchers and other scientists develop skills for oral presenting. The two, he stresses, are not interchangeable.

From a skills perspective, presenting helps people with all communication skills, Giatsidis says. “You can leverage this and use it anywhere,” he notes. “When we try to improve the way we communicate with others, we’re improving our internal communication. It helps us focus, be more precise.”

In his April discussion Giatsidis will expand on what he sees as key points for a good poster presentation:

1. Less is more. For posters and oral presentations, you have limited time to transmit your research to someone else. Use the time to your best advantage. Get your main message across clearly. Keep it focused and highlight key messages.
2. The main advantage of posters and oral presentations is that they are highly visual. Make sure you mostly use images and limit text, which is best used in publications instead, to the minimum necessary to understand the images.
3. Prioritize information visually, using layout and formatting to simultaneously guide the eyes and minds of those listening to you.

For an oral presentation, the slides can just be figures because the presenter is always there, talking the audience through information. Little or no text is necessary (often just a title) because the presenter’s voice provides the commentary. Slides should also be limited to stay focused: one slide per minute of presentation is a good rule of thumb (e.g., 10 slides for 10 minutes).

Giatsidis advises students, “It’s never too early to start thinking about doing presentations. It’s not something you learn and you’re done. It’s something you learn and you keep refining with time.”

If you are planning to attend the April Conference, mark this talk on your calendars. ■

