Welcome Message from the Editors of *El Faro*, Sandra Oviedo Ramirez and Allyson Hughes.

Welcome to the Summer 2016 edition of *El Faro: La Voz de la Red*. The purpose of this newsletter is to keep you up to date with current topics and research among the members of the National Hispanic Science Network (NHSN) and the Early Career Leadership Committee (ECLC). We also hope that this will allow you to stay connected with members of NHSN and also to make connections with new members and senior members alike. Our current issue of the newsletter highlights the 16th Annual National Hispanic Science Network conference that was held June 15 - June 17, 2016 at J.W. Marriott Desert Springs at Palm Springs, CA.

If you attended the conference, we hope that you enjoyed yourself. We have no doubt that you left the conference feeling inspired and informed by the clinical research, the epidemiological research, and the animal models research regarding drugs of abuse and their implications. The conference allowed for us to focus on the NHSN’s Mission Statement which states that “NHSN is dedicated to improving the health equity of Hispanics by increasing the amount, quality and dissemination of interdisciplinary translational research; and fostering the development and advancement of Hispanic scientists to promote future leaders.”

For this this edition we highlight the many innovative presentations that were presented at this year’s conference. This includes the conference accomplishments of current NHSN members, speed mentoring, the many well-deserving award winners, new investigators session, and we introduce new members to NHSN in the New Members Spotlight section.

We would like to offer a special thanks to the conference chairs, the national steering committee, ECLC co-chairs, conference chairs, conference planning committee, volunteers, and Betsy Giamo for another successful conference. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the funders - NIDA, NIAAA, and NEI as well as the support of LSUHSC, Seton Hall Institute of NeuroImmune Pharmacology, University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies, and the University of Texas at El Paso. We hope that you are enjoying your summer and catching up on relaxation and work. Enjoy the issue!

Sincerely,

Allyson & Sandra
New Investigators in Drug Abuse

Left to right: Bryan Cruz, B.A., Diana S. Hoover, Ph.D., Sara Weidberg, Ph.D., and Benjamin J. Becerra, DrPH.

The New Investigators in Drug Abuse Research panel was held on Thursday, June 16th. The purpose of the panel is to highlight early career researchers (including graduate students, Ph.D.s, and post-docs). Four presenters were featured this year and the presentations were chaired by Marisela Agudelo, Ph.D. and Christopher Salas-Wright, Ph.D.

The first presentation featured Benjamin J. Becerra, DrPH. He is an Assistant Professor teaching statistics and research at the School of Allied Health Professions at Loma Linda University. He presented his work titled “Health resource utilization among asthmatics with substance-related disorder.” The second presentation was presented by Diana Stewart Hoover, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor in the Department of Health Disparities Research at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. She presented her work titled “Association of Spanish-language health literacy with smoking status and problematic alcohol use among Latino adults.”

The third presentation was by Sara Weidberg, Ph.D., postdoctoral researcher at the University of Oviedo (Spain). She presented her work titled “A behavioral economic measure of smoking reinforcement as predictor of abstinence.” Lastly, Bryan Cruz, B.A., a first-year graduate student at the University of Texas at El Paso who is under the mentorship of Dr. Laura O’Dell, presented his work titled “Insulin normalizes the rewarding effects of nicotine observed in diabetic rats.”

Presentation Spotlights

Benjamin J. Becerra, DrPH, MPH, MS serves as an Assistant Professor teaching statistics and research at the School of Allied Health Professions at Loma Linda University. Dr. Becerra holds a Doctorate in Public Health (DrPH) in Epidemiology, with his dissertation focus on mental health service utilization among respiratory hospitalizations. Additionally, he has completed a certificate in Health Geoinformatics to create collaborative projects with geospatial technologies. His research interests include epidemiology, biostatistics, mental health, substance abuse,
complementary and integrative medicine, health disparities, and geographic information systems (GIS). In particular, his focus is in multidisciplinary approaches in tackling public health issues through epidemiologic and clinical research with best practices of GIS, molecular biology, business and administration, and other areas. Furthermore, he is a statistical consultant and has published on state and national datasets, such as the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) and California Health Interview Survey (CHIS).

The literature has highlighted the relationship between substance-related disorder (SRD) and alcohol-related disorders (ARD) with worsening chronic disease outcomes, with little research addresses the burden of SRD or ARD among those with asthma. It remains imperative to address whether patients hospitalized for asthma with SRD or ARD have worse health resource utilization and disposition outcomes.

Nationwide Inpatient Sample 2009-2011 was used to identify asthma hospitalizations among adults using the ICD-9-CM codes of 493.0x, 493.1x, 493.8x, and 493.9x. Health resource utilization was defined as length of stay (LOS) and total costs incurred by the hospital per discharge. Non-routine patient disposition was also assessed, where patients were not routinely discharged to home. ARD and SRD were identified using Clinical Classification Software codes of 660 and 661, respectively. All analyses were survey-weighted and adjusted for patient/hospital characteristics, as well as age-specific stratification.

179,789 asthma hospitalizations were identified, with 6.03% and 2.72% reporting SRD and ARD, respectively. Results demonstrate that SRD was associated with higher odds of non-routine disposition (OR=1.43), with the highest among 18-34 year olds (OR=2.07). ARD was associated with higher odds of non-routine disposition (OR=1.23), especially 50-64 year olds (OR=1.42). Increased burden may be due to increased asthma morbidity from hypersensitivity by drug metabolites, although future investigations by disposition type should be conducted.

No significant increase in LOS was found for SRD, except among the 65+ year age group (27% increase). The highest increase in LOS for ARD was among those 65+ years (11%). A moderate increase in costs with comorbid SRD or ARD was found for all ages (7% and 10%, respectively). Moreover, total costs were highest for SRD and ARD among 65+ years (25% and 10% increase, respectively).

Wu and Blazer (2011) have shown that older adults 50 years of age or older are less likely to perceive substance use as problematic or use treatment services, which could potentially account for this increase in health resource utilization. Community-based clinics and improved screening through integrated care models may address SRD/ARD status of patients to help curb the rising healthcare burden of chronic conditions.
Speed Mentoring

Each year NHSN has a speed mentoring session that rotates mentees through several rows of mentors. Below we provide some tips regarding preparing for and surviving speed mentoring!

1) Carry a notebook to write notes
2) Be prepared to state some basic information about yourself such as research skills that you possess, awards, achievements, etc.
3) Know your projects inside and out
4) Feel comfortable sharing with others what are your career aspirations and goals

Questions to ask mentors:
1) If you could only give one piece of job hunting advice to a new graduate, what would it be?
2) What was instrumental for you in landing your first professional job?
3) What soft skills should I develop or seek experience in? (or technical or professional skills; adapt as appropriate)
4) How can I improve my professional visibility?
5) What suggestions do you have based on my career field and goals?
6) Can you recommend two more people I should talk to?

National Awards for Excellence

Each year during the planning of the Annual Conference we solicit nominations for National Awards for Excellence in various categories. Categories recognize excellence in research across the spectrum of stage of career as well as excellence in mentoring and service provision. The call for nominations is typically released 8-12 weeks prior to the NHSN Conference. Please consider nominating yourself or those you work with for these awards next year!

Please join us in congratulating the following recipients of the 2016 NHSN Annual Awards for Excellence:

National Award of Excellence for Best Poster by a Young Investigator

Teresa Ramirez, Ph.D.
National Award of Excellence in Research by a Student
Allyson Hughes, M.A.

National Award of Excellence in Research by a Senior Investigator
James C. Anthony, Ph.D.

National Award of Excellence in Research by a New Investigator
Miguel Angel Cano, Ph.D.

National Award of Excellence in Mentorship
Laura O’Dell, Ph.D.

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Follow us on Twitter: @theNHSN
**Member Accomplishments**

Congratulations to Miguel Angel Cano, Ph.D., who was recently interviewed by Univision Network news reporter and anchor, Lourdes Del Rio. His interview aired as part of a segment on e-cigarette use during Despierta America, Hispanic America’s No. 1 morning show for 19 years, which enjoys a viewership of 839,000 across the nation.

His interview included information about his research regarding e-cigarette usage. If you are interested in watching his interview, the link is provided below.


We are happy to announce that the Steering committee for next year’s conference has been finalized. Congratulations to Drs. Laura O’Dell, Felipe Gonzalez Castro, Carlos Bolanos Guzman, Alice Cepeda, and Flavio Marsiglia!

**New Member Spotlight**

**Nazanin Heydarian,** M.A., earned her master’s degree in clinical psychology and is preparing her dissertation proposal. Nazanin’s research interests include prejudicial attitudes and attributions that health care providers hold about their patients with disabilities. She is also interested in working with health care providers and patients with disabilities in order to enhance the shared medical decision-making process, leading to higher satisfaction of care and optimal patient outcomes. Nazanin may be contacted at nmheydarian@miners.utep.edu or Naz.m.he@gmail.com.

**Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

I decided to join the NHSN to connect with the community of researchers of Hispanic health. I am excited to learn from other NHSN members and their experiences.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences)?**

I research prejudice toward minorities (particularly people with physical disabilities) in the healthcare setting.

**What is your dream in terms of your career?**
My dream career is to be a research director at a top medical school. I get excited about all sorts of health research and I love to get students excited about research. As a research director, I would be able to engage in many different research projects underway at the medical school and I would be able to mentor medical students with their research projects.

**What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?**

I have learned the language of research. More specifically, I have learned how to read and make judgments about the quality and replicability of others’ research reports, how to design and carry out experiments, and how to plan and carry out quantitative and qualitative data analyses.

**What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?**

I look for someone who is competent, someone who is comfortable engaging in a discussion and comfortable considering ideas that are different from her/his own, someone who treats all of her/his students fairly by allowing them equal access to opportunities and giving them equal amounts of her/his attention for tasks/projects when necessary. A mentor should provide good quality and timely feedback on relevant projects. I think that all of these qualities are important for mentors to have.

**Giovanna M. Perez, B.A.,** received her Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Texas State University in 2014. She is currently a non-degree seeking student at the University of Texas at El Paso. Her research interests include depression and anxiety, minority mental health, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Giovanna can be contacted at gmperez@miners.utep.edu or gperez0939@gmail.com

**Why did you decide to join the NHSN?**

I decided to join NHSN because of its emphasis in Hispanic health. I like that this organization is dedicated to illuminating the health disparities for this underrepresented population.

**Briefly describe your current line of research (2-3 sentences)?**

My current line of research is in sociocultural factors and their relationship with Hispanic mental health. Specifically, factors such as language use, ethnic pride, social support, and depression.

**What is your dream in terms of your career?**

My dream career is serving as an academic conducting research generalizable to the Hispanic community, in hopes of aiding those who suffer from depression and anxiety.

**What is the most important lesson you learned as a graduate student?**

The most important lesson I have learned is that it is not about time-
management but about self-management. More specifically, I have learned the importance of organizing yourself and learning about my own limits.

**What is the most important quality you look for in a mentor?**

The most important qualities I look for in a mentor are objectivity and fairness. These qualities make for a positive mentorship that will cultivate research and productivity.

**Membership Dues**

It is time to complete the payment for your NHSN membership for 2016.

- Research Scientist Members (Membership Fee: $100)
- Graduate Student Members (Membership Fee: $50)

NHSN membership will ensure your continued access to the strongest scientific network of scientists, mentors, and collaborators with the common interest. It will provide discounted registration fees at the annual conference and eligibility for travel award requests. Membership dues should be paid as follows:

1. Please go to this site: [www.LSUHealthFoundation.org](http://www.LSUHealthFoundation.org)
2. Click on "Donate now"
3. Or click on "Make your gift online now!"
4. On the secondary screen below where the amount is entered, there is a box called "Designation". In that drop down list, there’s a fund "NHSN Membership" that you should select. This will direct the registration fee to fund 622016. Be sure to identify whom the fee is for although this says a donation. We will be able to send a receipt following confirmation identifying it as membership dues payment.
5. Please send an email with a copy of the donation notification to Betsy Giaimo at mgiaim@lsuhsc.edu once you have completed this process. This will allow the NHSN to check and verify your membership dues have made it to the correct fund and ensure that you are included in items sent to the membership.

**Pictures from the NHSN 2016 Conference**
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