



Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee

LA GACETA Summer 2021 Newsletter



LCDR Carlos González-Mercado is a licensed pharmacist and currently serves as an emergency coordinator for the Counterterrorism and Emergency Coordination Staff (CTECS), Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER) at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). LCDR González-Mercado has been an active member of the Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC) since 2015 and has helped to support the vision of the Office of the Surgeon General to protect, promote, advance the health and safety of the nation, and promote Hispanic interests and accomplishments within the USPHS. LCDR González-Mercado earned his Doctor of Pharmacy degree from Nova Southeastern University in Puerto Rico after the completion of his bachelor's degree in chemistry.

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LCDR Carlos González-Mercado
FDA



HOAC Chair 2021 Welcome

On behalf of HOAC Executive Committee and Voting Members, we would like to welcome this year with open arms and certain that your creativity and vision will contribute immensely towards achieving new goals for our committee.

Each of the HOAC members bring a unique perspective and background to our group, and we can't wait to see the result of it, starting with this new edition of La Gaceta.

I hope you enjoy our contributions and this way of communicating the many great accomplishments and leadership we have to offer.

¡Bienvenidos!

“This newsletter is for informational purposes only and does not reflect official views of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps or USPHS leadership.”



2020 Subcommittee Accomplishments

Awards and Recognition:



LCDR Denise Duran - CDC



- Kept awards process running smooth with on time announcement on Feb 28th, extended deadlines for max participation.
- Created HOACawards@gmail.com account, socialized awards on HOAC Facebook page and through JOAG listserv to increase awareness and visibility.
- Recruited 6 sub-committee members to ease awards scoring process.
- De-identification process implemented to improve awards scoring procedures.
- Successfully applied new processes.



LT Adelaida Rosario- OASH



- Improved awards scoring system 2020 Awards winners.
- Provided documentation to awardees for eOPF, provided data for La Gaceta (summer edition), and advised MOLC to recognize awardees at the 2020 AMSUS annual meeting.
- Updated HOAC Special assignment Award.
- (SAA) nomination form to align with MOLC guidance and submitted nine nomination packages to MOLC for SG review, 100% approval of all nominations.

Communications and Public Relations:



CDR Elizabeth Garza - CDC



- Published “La Gaceta” Newsletter HOAC officers in action.
- HOAC website up-to-date information for all members.
- Promoted HOAC Max.gov resulting in improved Executive Committee and Subcommittee effectiveness.
- Grew our Hispanic Officer Facebook community improved our visibility, promoted HOAC activities, events, and networking.
- Developed monthly officer spotlights and shared on our Facebook community to showcase our officers and learn more about the amazing work our officers do for their agencies, on deployment and for their communities.



CDR Maria DeArman- USCG



- Developed monthly health education/health promotion messages to encourage our officers to tie into the SG priorities and engage with their communities to promote better health outcomes.
- Developed monthly career development messages to promote leadership and career advancement skills for our officers.
- Developed monthly deployment readiness messages to promote deployment readiness of our officers as it relates to better serving Hispanic/Latino communities.

Charter and Bylaws:



CDR Matthew Lozier - CDC



- Created SOP for requesting changes to Charter or Bylaws
- Reviewed and approved new SOP for Voting Member selection process into Bylaws.
- Reviewed and approved new SOP for Senior Advisor selection process into Bylaws
- Uploaded new version of Charter and Bylaws into max.gov.



LCDR Paula Arango- ICE



- A. Maintained the HOAC Active Bilingual Officers Roster (currently 150 participants)
- B. Recruited various officers into HOAC and added them to the Spanish-speaking deployment roster.
- Developed and issued the Deployment survey analysis
- Created the Deployment and Readiness Subcommittee Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)
- Recruited volunteers for bilingual speakers and officers who would like to learn Spanish for our subcommittee’s buddy system program.

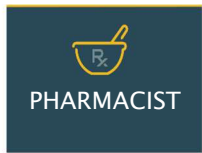


2020 Subcommittee Accomplishments (cont.)

Recruitment and Retention:



CDR Matthew Rodriguez - CMS



- Recruited ten new members to HOAC members during calendar year 2020
- Updated recruitment resources consistent with the USPHS Commissioned Corps Communications Toolkit and developed a recruitment e-mail template to send to Hispanic Serving Institutions
- Developed Standard operating procedures for Recruitment and Retention subcommittee



LCDR Peng "Jeff" Zhou- FDA



- Developed an email template to welcome new HOAC members, provide information about HOAC and encourage attendance at monthly HOAC general meetings
- Provided update to the ASH on the efforts of the recruitment and retention subcommittee and provided recommendations to increase the number of Hispanic Officers in the Commissioned Corps
- Increased knowledge and awareness of HOAC with in person representation at OBC Open Houses until OBC moved to a virtual format

Nomination and Membership:



LCDR Jackeline Rodriguez - CMS



In the past 10 months, our country has experienced the widespread effects of the COVID -19 pandemic resulting in\ uncertainty and increased mental and health concerns for many. As voting members of the Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC), we are committed to efforts contributing to the national response and advancing the health of the Hispanic population and underserved communities in our Nation. Whether on mission critical status with our agencies or while on deployment, we worked to accomplish the HOAC mission. This year the Nomination and Membership Subcommittee coordinated selection of 9 new voting members and a Senior Advisor, despite facing difficult challenges.



LCDR Ramses Diaz-Vargas
- FDA

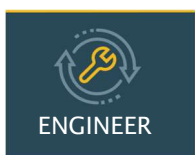


That process included providing analytical support related to the reviewing, scoring and ranking system for HOAC candidates and the training of current voting members for the selection process. Additionally, the subcommittee bylaws were revised and a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) was added with the input reflecting the feedback of voting members. This year all voting members were invited and encouraged to participate in the selection process. We feel very proud, humble, and grateful for the opportunity to serve in this subcommittee and recognize the contributions made by other HOAC voting members. We would like to thank all the candidates who applied and welcome the new voting members joining us in 2021!

Outreach and Education:



CDR Abraham Marrero - ASPR



- Successfully Moderated and led 2 Hispanic Heritage Month webinars from Director Level participants.
- Trained and prepared fellow HOAC junior officer to successfully lead one of 3 HHM webinars.
- Developed and collaborated with other HOAC Subcommittees to create flyers and advertise HHM webinar series with other social platforms and PHS groups resulting in an excellent turnout in attendance.





MESSAGE FROM 2020 HOAC CHAIR



LCDR Adriana Restrepo - BOP



As we begin to wrap up a unique year filled with challenges and opportunities, I take this time to reflect on all HOAC's accomplishments this year.

We started out the year with several goals which focused on communication and collaboration between HOAC subcommittees and other advisory groups, enhancing opportunities for advanced education and training while developing the professional competencies and overall readiness preparedness of our officers, and continuing to meet the Surgeon General's priorities.

Despite dealing with the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, HOAC officers remained focused on yearly goals and serving as force multipliers on various fronts while continuing to remain ready to respond.

One of the main highlights of the year was the Hispanic Heritage Celebration – Webinar Series. HOAC officers coordinated three separate webinars to include discussions on topics related to health disparities, resilience, and mental health issues among the Hispanic communities.

Additional accomplishments included multiple contributions by subcommittee leads to help streamline efforts on key documents as well as develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for respective subcommittees. Collaborations with MOLC and other advisory groups consisted on ensuring the Surgeon General's priorities were met, providing subject matter expertise for the review of PACE lesson plans, and serving on panel discussion on the topic of cultural competency as part of a leadership summit.

Furthermore, ongoing recruitment and retention efforts continue, and resources have been streamlined to meet USPHS recruitment materials.

All in all, we have learned this year to be creative and flexible, adapt to changes in our routines, and appreciate things we may not have had a chance to appreciate.

Many warm thanks to all of you who have supported and continue to support HOAC's mission. Looking forward to many more achievements in the new year.





WELCOME TO THE 2021 HOAC Subcommittee Chairs & Co-Chairs

SUBCOMMITTEE	CHAIR	CO-CHAIR
Awards and Recognition	LCDR Denise Duran	LCDR Juana Figueroa
Communications and Public Relations	LCDR Cristina Mosquera	CDR Abraham Marrero
Recruitment and Retention	LCDR Melissa Parra	CDR Cesar Perez
Deployment and Readiness	LCDR Paula Arango	LCDR Jorge Muñiz-Ortiz
Charter and Bylaws	CDR Matthew Lozier	LCDR Thalia Vega
Nomination and Membership	LCDR Leslie Rivera-Rosado	CDR Gustavo Ceinos
Education and Outreach	CDR Michelle Rodriguez	LCDR Joshua Medero-Padin

2021 Incoming New Voting Members

CDR Cesar Perez
CDR Gustavo Ceinos
CDR Michelle Rodriguez
LCDR Cristina Mosquera
LCDR Jorge Muñiz-Ortiz
LCDR Juana Figueroa
LCDR Leslie Rivera-Rosado
LCDR Medero Padin

Current Returning Voting Members

CDR Matthew Lozier
CDR Abraham Marrero
LCDR Denise Duran
LCDR Melissa Parra
LCDR Paula Arango

2021 Executive Committee

Chair - Lcdr Carlos Gonzalez-Mercado

Vice-Chair/Chair - Elect 2022 - Lcdr Ramses Diaz-Vargas

Secretary - CDR Matthew Rodriguez

Treasurer - Lcdr Jackeline Rodriguez

MOLC Reps - Lcdr Peng Zhou and LT Adelaida Rosario

2021-2023 Senior Advisor - CAPT Ivonne Arena

<https://dcp.psc.gov/OSG/hoac/subcommittees.aspx>



HOAC Published Author Spotlight



While assigned with CDC, CDR Cardemil had two publications which highlighted Hispanic Veterans' COVID hospitalization rate and severe outcomes, and COVID-related in-hospital complications.

CDR Christina Cardemil - CDC



1. Risk for In-Hospital Complications Associated with COVID-19 and Influenza — Veterans Health Administration, United States, October 1, 2018–May 31, 2020

Weekly / October 23, 2020 / 69(42);1528–1534

https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6942e3.htm?s_cid=mm6942e3_w

Hospitalized patients with COVID-19 in the Veterans Health Administration had a more than five times higher risk for in-hospital death and increased risk for 17 respiratory and nonrespiratory complications than did hospitalized patients with influenza. The risks for sepsis and respiratory, neurologic, and renal complications of COVID-19 were higher among non-Hispanic Black or African American and Hispanic patients than among non-Hispanic White patients.

2. COVID-19-associated hospitalization rates and severe outcomes among Veterans from 5 Veteran Affairs Medical Centers, February 27–July 17, 2020: Hospital-Based Surveillance

<https://preprints.jmir.org/preprint/24502>

COVID-19 has disproportionately affected older adults and certain racial and ethnic groups in the US. Data quantifying the disease burden, as well as describing clinical outcomes during hospitalization among these groups, is needed.





2020 PACE Regional **Service** Award



Pictured above: LCDR Thalia VEGA - IHS



Members of HOAC selected as the 2020 recipients of the PACE Regional **Service** Award.

CDR Mizraim Mendoza, LCDR Thalia Vega and 4 other pharmacists founded the Phoenix Community Health Advancement through Teaching (CHAT) team to provide community education.

CHAT team participated in 16 community health collaborations including 10 PACE events, totaling 36 contact hours, and reaching an estimated 577 people from 1/1/18 through 12/31/19.

Their efforts have demonstrated positive local, regional, and national impact on their community.





2021 HOAC HONOR Award Recipients



VADM Antonia C. Novello Award

LCDR Jackeline Rodriguez - CMS



LCDR Jackeline Rodriguez is a nurse officer in the USPHS. Her career with the USPHS began within the Bureau of Prisons, caring for federal inmates and addressing a unique level of clinical diversity. She is currently stationed within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and serves as a Nurse Consultant within the Survey and Operations Group in Boston, MA. She provides consultations and oversees regional survey operations and processes for Long Term Care facilities within the six New England states.

During the PHE, she conducted Focused Infection Control surveys and recently served as subject matter expert on the Region 1 Interagency Task Force for the prevention of COVID-19 in Long Term Care environments. This task force published numerous regional reports and recommendations that strive for maximum mitigation of negative outcomes and employ evidence-based “best practices” in an effort to provide high quality patient care.

Furthermore, she has responded to various public health emergencies throughout the nation; most recently, she was part of the USPHS response to Hurricane Maria/Harvey/Irma in Puerto Rico during 2017 and was deployed to Texas to support the crisis at the southern border mission in 2019.

In addition to her time with the USPHS, Lcdr Rodriguez has extensive clinical expertise working with patients in private sector hospitals and has over twelve years of clinical experience. She received her BSN from the University of Florida and is ANCC board certified in medical/surgical nursing. She received her MS in Community/Urban nursing and MPH from Hunter College in New York City.





2021 HOAC HONOR Award Recipients (cont.)



VADM Richard H. Carmona Award

CDR Luz Rivera - OASH



CDR Luz Rivera is a Clinical Psychologist, qualitative researcher, and subject matter expert in Behavioral Health/ Sexual Abuse trauma care consultation cases. She cared for victims and survivors of sexual abuse, has conducted sexual abuse allegations evaluations for the court, and is a clinical provider for primary and secondary victims of domestic violence and sexual abuse.

She holds a Certification in Domestic Violence Traumatic Stress Intervention and a Certification in Sexual Abuse Traumatic Stress Intervention. As a Scientist, she has presented her research at national and international forums provoking social change for vulnerable and underserved, most of the time unseen populations.

CDR Rivera serves as Regional Director for the Ending the HIV Epidemic with the Office of Assistant Secretary for Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In this position she serves 5 states, 68 Federally Recognized Tribes and covering two-thirds of the US-Mexico Border to eliminate the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) in hardest hit communities targeting more than 40 million individuals in this geographic area.

Prior to joining OASH, CDR Rivera served with FDA oversaw the quality review teams for PEPFAR, antivirals, rare diseases and breakthrough therapy treating serious conditions at the 3rd most active Division.

CDR Rivera has more than 30 years of experience in national/international community engagement and is a Champion in providing high quality cultural and linguistic health care to Hispanic/Latino population; since the late 80's serving as advisor for a HIV/AIDS telephone hotline providing confidential support to patients and families living with HIV/AIDS, the Muscular Dystrophy Association, Substance Abuse Disorder Rehabilitation Program and Red Cross. She also served as an Intern with the Puerto Rico Senate Women's Commissioned consulting and promoting laws in behalf of the Hispanic women.

CDR Rivera authored an innovative technique to help retrieve traumatic memories that later where manage during the psychotherapy process. As a Behavioral Health provider, she has served in crisis response and grieving for patients and families. CDR Rivera holds a doctoral degree in clinical psychology and three master's degrees in education, regulatory science & health safety, and psychology.





2021 HOAC HONOR award Recipients (cont.)



Juan Carlos Finlay: Significant Achievement Award

LT Sandra Herrera - ICE



LT Sandra Herrera, APRN, FNP-BC, PMHNP-BC knew she wanted to be a nurse practitioner serving the Hispanic medically underserved people since she was in high school. Mainly because growing up as a first-generation Mexican American, with Spanish speaking parents, she learned what it was like to have limited access to good health care in a language you understand. LT Herrera experienced first-hand, through her parents, being in a situation where you are treated differently due to a language barrier and immigrant status.

LT Herrera attended Streamwood High School where she took health occupation classes that enabled her to graduate high school with a Nursing Assistant certificate and went straight to work in a community hospital. LT Herrera first obtained her B.S. in Nursing with a minor in Psychology in 2002 from Elmhurst College graduating Cum Laude. In the hospital, she worked in the med-surg unit, the telemetry unit and the TICU. During her time in the hospital, LT Herrera was regularly sought by other units to translate for Spanish speaking patients due to her mastery of the language and clinical background. While working full time as a Registered Nurse, LT Herrera worked on her master's in nursing at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, IL. She graduated in 2008 and obtained her board certification as a Family Nurse Practitioner.

LT Herrera worked in several federal grant funded clinics in Chicago and San Antonio that provided primary and preventive health care services to medically underserved populations prior to joining South Texas ICE Processing Center in September 2013. After working in the facility as an Advanced Practice Provider for 4 years, she joined PHS in February 2018 and quickly promoted as Facility Lead Advanced Practice Provider, recognizing her clinical abilities. STIPC is the largest ICE Health Service Corps (IHSC) facility in the nation with an operational capacity of 1,800 beds and processing over 35,000 detainees yearly. Most of these detainees are escaping persecution from their country of origin and after hearing their hardships, LT Herrera recognized the need to gain some experience in mental health. In 2019, she completed a Post Masters Certificate from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and was board certified as a Psychiatric Mental Health Practitioner. LT Herrera felt the added education in mental health was necessary to understand human growth and development from a psychological perspective, and to become well-versed in social issues to avoid judgment and approach the population from a place of knowledge and compassion.

In December 2019, LT Herrera was selected as the Assistant Health Service Administrator of STIPC. In this role, she ensures access to care and provision of healthcare services are within the scope and support of policy and accreditation standards to include medical, dental, and mental health care. As AHSA, her facility was recipient of the IHSC Facility of the Quarter Award for Quarter 1, FY 2021. The IHSC Facility of the Quarter Award recognizes facilities for their extraordinary accomplishments that enhance and support the ICE and IHSC missions by providing excellent care.





¡¡Un poema para todos ustedes! A Poem for You All!!

Yo no tengo soledad
En la noche desamparo
de las sierras hasta el mar.
Pero yo, la que te mece,
¡yo no tengo soledad!
En el cielo desamparo
si la Luna cae al mar.
Pero yo, la que te estrecha,
¡yo no tengo soledad!
En el mundo desamparo
y la carne triste va.
Pero yo, la que te oprime,
¡yo no tengo soledad!

I do not know solitude
It is the night I abandon
from the mountains to the
sea.
But I, who cradle you,
no solitude for me!
It is the sky I abandon
if the Moon falls to the sea.
But I, who embrace you,
no solitude for me!
It is the world I abandon
and the sad flesh leaves.
But I, who smother you,
no solitude for me!

Gabriela Minstral
-Peruvian Poet

Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC) informs and advises the Office of the Surgeon General (OSG) on matters concerning the Hispanic Latino community. Focusing on professional development opportunities, education, community outreach, and a network of support for officers committed to promoting, advancing, and protecting the health and safety of Hispanic Latino communities throughout the nation and globally.

If you are interested in joining HOAC or have any questions please contact the Nomination and Membership Subcommittee Chairs: LCDR Leslie Rivera-Rosado - Leslie.Rivera-Rosado@fda.hhs.gov
CDR Gustavo Ceinos - Gustavo.Ceinos@hq.dhs.gov.

Visit our [Website](#) | Join us at [USPHS HOAC Facebook Group](#)



HOAC Members: *Articles from the Field*

By: LCDR Jackeline Rodriguez – CMS



Prevention efforts and response during the public health emergency

As a nurse officer in the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) I am currently stationed within the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) and serve as a Nurse Consultant within the Survey and Operations Group in Boston, MA. I provide consultations and oversee regional survey operations and processes for Long Term Care facilities and hospitals within the six New England states. During the public health emergency (PHE), I was designated mission critical and performed Focused Infection Control surveys across the region. Focused Infection Control surveys were prioritized in order to aid in the prevention of COVID and increase infection control awareness among nursing homes. This involved a lot of regional traveling on my own and as part of a team. I was responsible for inventory and burn rate tracking of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). I would evaluate patient health care, healthcare delivery systems and public health situations for compliance with a complex body of health care regulations. Our mission was to assure basic levels of quality and safety for all patients, residents and clients receiving care from Medicare and Medicaid certified institutional providers.

During the PHE, my focus was nursing homes. The communal nature of nursing homes and the population served placed those living and working within at increased risk of infection and severe illness from COVID. During this time, I also served as subject matter expert under the FEMA and ASPR Region 1 Interagency Task Force for the prevention of COVID-19 in Long Term Care environments. This task force published numerous regional reports and recommendations that strive for maximum mitigation of negative outcomes and employ evidence-based “best practices” in an effort to provide high quality patient care. Data collection, partner engagements, and key actions were needed to successfully respond to the ongoing pandemic and to ensure guidance is available for future public health emergencies.





Articles from the Field (cont.)

By: LCDR Ramses D. Diaz-Vargas - FDA



Epidemiological Investigation and Contact Tracing in Collaboration with a Rural, Central North Carolina County Health Department in Response to COVID-19



A United States Public Health Service team deployed to North Carolina in June 2020 for six weeks as part of the COVID-19 Deployment: NC Community Task Force to assist eight county health departments experiencing community spread of COVID-19. Our team, a four-member subgroup of the larger team, was assigned to work in collaboration with a rural, central North Carolina county health department to provide assistance with epidemiological case investigation and contact tracing with the goal of mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

Some of the county challenges in conducting case investigations and contact tracing include a large Hispanic population necessitating an interpreter or bilingual staff, limited trained health department personnel, mistrust of government by the residents, and resident’s lack of working phones.

My role during this deployment was to serve as a Case Investigator/Contact Tracer/Translator conducting epidemiological investigation and contact tracing supporting the North Carolina County Health Department.

It was a great experience to be able to collaborate with the North Carolina County Department of Health. Cultural awareness, language proficiency and communication skills played a key role for the success of this mission. I feel very proud, humble, and grateful for this great opportunity to serve our nation and the North Carolina’s Hispanic community in that moment of crisis.





Articles from the Field (cont.)

By: LCDR Sandra Carpio – ASPR



COVID-19 in a ~99% Hispanic Population: Puerto Rico Case

After much passionate work protecting and promoting the public health of ~3.2M Latinos in Puerto Rico, the territory ranks #7 within the US (states and territories) in doses administered per 100,000 population, boasting a 77.7% vaccination rate of individuals 18 years old and older with at least one shot, and ~68% fully vaccinated.

Puerto Rico has a population of approximately 3.2M people, and according to the last data from the Census Bureau, 98.7% of those individuals are Hispanic/Latino. It is also worth noting that ~44% of this population lives under the poverty line.

The people of Puerto Rico have been dealing with response and recovery of multiple disasters since the devastating 2017 Hurricane Season, when they went through two major hurricanes (Category 5 Irma, and Category 4 Maria) in less than a two-week period. Since then, the islanders have been recovering and dealing with subsequent hurricane seasons (worth noting: Tropical Storms Laura & Isaiah during the 2020 Hurricane Season), a series of earthquakes and tremors that started in December 2019 and are still ongoing, and persisting high positivity rates of COVID-19.

As part of the 2017 recovery activities, the Puerto Rico Department of Health (PRDOH) identified it needed to update its vaccination tracking system, and though the revamp was on its way, the system was not fully functional for when the Nation started distributing COVID-19 vaccines in December 2020.

During the vaccination campaign on the island, there were data and information backlog issues that needed to be addressed; PRDOH, HHS and other federal agencies continued aggressive educational campaigns and the



From left to right: Lilliam Rodriguez (VOCES CEO), Dr. Sandra Carpio (ESF8 LNO, LCDR USPHS), Hon. Alexis Torres (PR Secretary of Public Safety), Hon. Carlos Mellado (PR Secretary of Health, MD), Nino Correa (Emergency Management Board Commissioner), Orlando Olivera (FEMA Caribbean Area Office Coordinator).



Articles from the Field (cont.)

Text continues:

jurisdiction never saw over 7.2% of vaccine hesitancy. Working as Emergency Support Function #8 Liaison Officer and serving as the point of contact (POC) for the planning and logistics of the COVID-19 vaccination campaign on the island, and in coordination with HHS/ASPR Region 2 Emergency Coordinator CAPT Andrew Chen, I was in charge of guaranteeing that senior Federal officials had accurate information with which to make the proper decisions on whether PR required Federal support, which was especially important as Federal medical resources were already severely limited nationwide due to COVID-19. This allowed the FEMA Federal Coordinating Officer and HHS Federal Coordinating Health Officials to not over-deploy and overcommit Federal resources so they could be used in other more-impacted jurisdictions. I also served as the POC for the planning and logistics of the vaccination of the federal workforce on the island, guaranteeing and coordinating the vaccination of over 20,000 federal employees.

Through the identification of gaps while serving as the action officer for COVID-19 vaccine operations, I was humbled to be able to directly contribute to the Commonwealth's administration of over 3.9M vaccine doses (without the need for Federal community vaccination centers), thereby ensuring over 1.9M citizens have been fully vaccinated, as of July 29, 2021 (as reported by the CDC), and with minimal loss or wastage of vaccine. After much passionate work protecting and promoting the public health of ~3.2M Latinos in Puerto Rico, the territory ranks #7 within the US (states and territories) in doses administered per 100,000 population, boasting a 77.7% vaccination rate of individuals 18 years old and older with at least one shot, and ~68% fully vaccinated. By July 1st, Puerto Rico had surpassed President's Biden goal of vaccinating *70% of the population 18 years old and over with at least one shot by July 4th*, reporting then that 73% of the island's population had received at least one shot.

Being a US Public Health Service Commissioned Corps officer has always been a privilege and honor; but being able to serve your own underserved community of Latinos/Hispano has brought a new meaning to my career.

Count your blessings in the middle of the storm, right?





Articles from the Field (cont.)

By: LT Isabel Nieto – HRSA



Deployments



In May of 2020, I deployed on the first strike team to Pennsylvania, with officers from a variety of categories, to support the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency by providing assessments, advice, and education to 22 Long Term Care Facilities (LTCFs). I contributed by providing education on COVID and infection prevention and control (IPC) measures, as well as conducted N95 respirator fit evaluations for LTCF staff. We were strategically separated into three teams to target different regions of the state and as the logistics officer for my team I was responsible for keeping track of our Personal Protective Equipment burn rate. In October of 2020, I was deployed with the first strike team to Minnesota, which consisted of all nurses. We traveled throughout the state to the four LTCFs most affected by the pandemic as staff to combat the critical nursing shortages they were experiences. The overall resident infection rate was 50.5% and the overall staff infection rate was 39.8%. I contributed as a nurse passing meds, assisting

with activities of daily living (ADLs), safety observations, IPC education, and reinforcing best practices. My most recent deployment, in April of 2021, was to Arizona where I got to work closely with Customs and Border Patrol. On a team with registered nurses, Nurse Practitioners, and Doctors, we provided 24/7 on sight medical support to persons in custody (PICs) along the Southwest border, at times ranging to 150 PICs a day. I provided basic acute care, medical and behavioral screenings, and translation while PICs were at these short-term processing facilities.





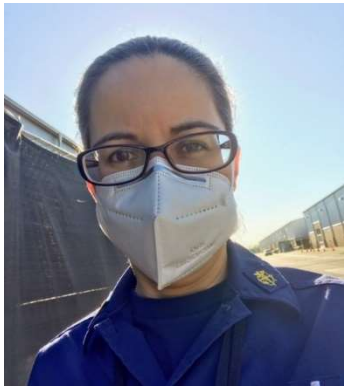
Articles from the Field (cont.)

By: LCDR Leslie Ann Rivera Rosado – FDA



SCIENTIST

Notes from the Field: Our Call to Duty



When deployed, you will undoubtedly find yourself leading or being part of a team of highly motivated individuals that will want to do more, help more, complete the mission faster. Unfortunately, sometimes we find ourselves working under special constraints -political, mission-related, time, resources, etc. -and these constraints will limit our ability to help as much as we wish we could. When confronted with situations like this, I like to remind myself of a tale I read long ago and that I would like to share with you as I shared it with my team when deployed supporting the Artemis Unaccompanied

Children Mission in San Antonio, TX this summer.

THE STARFISH STORY – adapted from “The Star Thrower” by Loren Eiseley

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, “What are you doing?” The youth replied, “Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them back, they’ll die.” “Son,” the man said, “don’t you realize there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can’t make a difference!”

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said... “I made a difference for that one.”

For those of us dedicated to public service the “starfish story” is our call to duty, knowing that each life you touch matters, even if it is only one.





Articles from the Field (cont.)

By: CDR Gustavo Ceinos – DHS
LCDR Paula Arango – ICE



USPHS Commissioned Corps Service Access Team Response to Coronavirus Disease Mission

In March 2020, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) Service Access Team (SAT) Deployment Teams were activated to deploy officers to Dobbins Air Reserve Base (ARB) outside of Atlanta, Georgia. Members of the SAT teams included CDR Patricio Garcia as Team Lead, CAPT Jessica Feda as Deputy Team Lead, and CAPT Sean Bradley as Operations and Logistics Lead. CDR Joseph Zagame, CDR Gustavo Ceinos, CDR Frank Koch, CDR Crystal Russel, LCDR Paula Arango, LCDR Katrina Goan, LCDR Jonathan Owen, LCDR Michele Gottshall, and LT Philip Kapatos supported the mission acting as Case



USPHS Service Access Team (SAT) outside of Building 727 in Dobbins ARB.



CDR Gustavo Ceinos and LCDR Paula Arango in the SAT Pack office.

Managers. We collaborated with Health and Human Services (HHS) and other government partners such as the National Disaster Medical Service (NDMS), Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT), and Disaster Mortuary Operational Response Team (DMORT). Our mission was to provide case management services to passengers from the Grand Princess cruise ship placed under mandatory Federal quarantine. These passengers were housed at different military facilities throughout the country.

The SATs were created as part of the National Response Framework's Emergency Support Function. The teams are a Tier 2 Response, thus requiring deployment within 36 hours of activation. The mission of the SATs are to provide resources as well as assistance to local health authorities throughout the country and overseas. During this deployment, the primary functions of the SAT were coordinating the screening process of the Grand Princess passengers, medical case management, passenger quarantine lodging, human services, and data collection

using the Joint Patient Assessment Tracking System.

The Grand Princess cruise ship docked in Oakland, California with 497 passengers: many with symptoms with



Text continues:

COVID-19. These passengers were transported to Dobbins ARB and, upon arrival, were screened for symptoms. The symptomatic passengers were transported immediately to the nearest hospital. The asymptomatic passengers were placed under mandatory Federal quarantine for 14 days and housed at four different sites on-base. These passengers had their temperature checked daily by Federal staff to monitor any changes in their health. Of the asymptomatic passengers, only 123 gave consent to test for the virus. The testing process took place over a 4-day period. The passengers who tested positive were housed outside the base at a vacant hotel contracted by the Government.

Telephone town hall meetings were held daily at 1600 hrs. by members of the Incident Management Team to provide updates and address any questions or concerns from the passengers. These townhall meetings helped ensure passengers that we were complying with Federal laws and that guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention were being meticulously followed. As the final days of mandated quarantine approached, we contacted the passengers and their families in order to inform them of their release date and prepared travel arrangements.

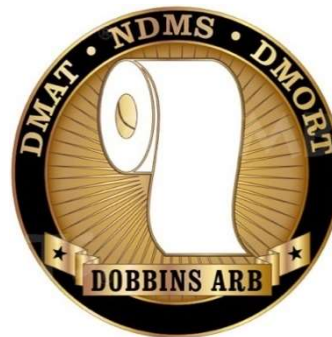
As a team and as USPHS Officers, we fulfilled the mission of our service to protect, promote, and advance the health and safety of the nation and we achieved this mission through the rapid and effective response to public health needs from our SAT. We felt a sense of accomplishment with every passenger we were able to help, be it their health care need or with a family reunification. In spite of the lack of supplies, water, medicine and food, the passengers we met were strong, determined to overcome their current situation and willing to comply with the Federal quarantine. It was an honor to have participated in this deployment and served the passengers of the Grand Princess cruise ship.



A thank you card made by a passenger from the Grand Princess cruise ship.



SAT Pack! SAT members from USPHS, NDMS, DMAT, and DMORT.



Coins from the deployment designed by Earl Barnes, DMORT.





2021 Hispanic Heritage Month Activities

Hispanic Heritage Month Presentations:

September 17, 2021 at 2:00 PM ET

PHS-sponsored event

Latino Health Disparities, the Immigrant Paradox, and COVID-19

Dr. Eliseo J. Perez-Stable, M.D.–Director,

National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

https://fda.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_Z6j2d5NuQ0yg2HSf4lvVtw

September 22, 2021 at 2:00 PM ET

HRSA-sponsored event

***Improving the Delivery of Health Services to Hispanic Americans
Through the ‘Promotoras de Salud’ Model***

HRSA leaders, Grantee Organizations, and HRSA staff

<https://hrsa.gov.zoomgov.com/j/1610106473?pwd=RUZlc1BrV1p1K0c5aEcxYV0NjbmJ2Zz09>

September 23, 2021 at 2:00 PM ET

CMS-Sponsored event

Education Equity

*Dr. Jerry Garcia, Ph.D.–Vice President of Educational Services at Sea Mar
Community Health Centers “Clinica de la Comunidad”*

<https://cms.zoomgov.com/s/1612309418>

September 30, 2021 at 2:00 PM EST

CMS-Sponsored event

Employment Equity

*Dr. Ruth Zambrana, Ph.D.–Professor, Department of Women’s Studies, Director of
the Consortium on Race, Gender and Ethnicity at the University of Maryland*

<https://cms.zoomgov.com/s/1612309418>

October 5, 2021 at 2:00 PM EST

ACF-sponsored event

Recruitment, retention and promotion of Hispanics at ACF

ACF Staff

<https://acf-hhs.gov.zoomgov.com/j/1615006175?pwd=SHZJTFFhNanU5dHJoNDhBKzdGekR2Zz09>

HEO-sponsored event

Hispanic representation, inclusion, and equity in health

*Marvin Figueroa, Director, Intergovernmental and External Affairs (IEA) and
Martin Mendoza, PhD, Director of Health Equity All of Us Research Program*

<https://fda.zoomgov.com/j/1601296448?pwd=eStrR3lOVdYvQWVzb0QvSGNnK1lDUT09>





HOAC Senior Advisor: CAPT Ivonne Arena - DHA



LEADERSHIP CORNER

10 Career Lessons Learned

Lessons from USN/USPHS commissioning and professional military/civilian education:

- 1) **Time Management** – never be late, but early is a waste also
- 2) **As leader you have to display the confidence no matter what circumstance** – others are looking up to you.
- 3) **If a decision needs to be made – make it.** As a healthcare administrator I like to analyze a situation, but when a quick decision needs to be made, make it based on information available.
- 4) **Weigh the mission vs personnel in decisions – best balance is 50/50.** You have to complete the mission, but it doesn't help to take the hill if you don't have the people left to hold it.
- 5) **Attention to Detail** – in all aspects, whether wear of the uniform to making a bed to putting together a brief.
- 6) **Always prepare for briefs and meetings** – always prepare and dry run. Try to anticipate any possible questions as well.
- 7) **Always check things out personally.** Get out walk around the site and measure.
- 8) **Get involved and get your hands dirty.** We had to dig up the pad for a sensor, and I'd ask for 2 shovels to help. The junior officers were happy to see an officer helping, while some senior officers complained about digging, so in those situations they did the digging.
- 9) **Keep a log of your activities** (Walt Miller) – I have continued to document my daily activities and meeting notes. I have needed these when proving what I've done as a senior officer. In a meeting, it's what's said not the slides where the details are.
- 10) **Know where your people are** (Walt Miller) – if the boss is looking for one of you people, know where they are and how the quickly get in touch with them. Supervisor lesson.

Sources: Mr. Robert Wolfe and Mr. Walt Miller

