

# MTPCCR

Minority Training Program *in* Cancer Control Research

Volume 2, Issue 1

Spring 2007

## A Message From our Principal Investigators

Dear MTPCCR Alums, we send each of you our fondest greetings through the second edition of our newsletter! This is a time of great excitement: the start of our third grant for another five years, taking us through the classes of 2011 !!! Your numbers are growing, and along with them, the MTPCCR Network around the country. Our new grant also brings the promise of a third MTPCCR site. Yes, we are venturing beyond the borders of California! We'll bring you more on this over the next year as the process unfolds.

Several of you were able to attend the Annual Dinner at APHA - and great to see you all again! We hope to see as many of you as possible at the APHA meeting in Washington DC this November 4-7, 2007!!! As always, we urge you to please stay in touch with us and keep us current on your address and email. Rather than a constant stream of emails, we try to be very discriminating in what we send you - only items that we believe will be highly relevant for you.

We thank you in advance for completing your annual alumni survey. As you know, these data are the lifeblood of our efforts to keep the MTPCCR alive and growing - our funders need to know our impact on our goal!

Lastly, if you ever wish to reach us (and we hope you do), please CALL Rena at (415) 514-8110 or Margie at (310) 825-9481. You can email us but if we don't answer right away, please know that the email may have passed unopened. Please don't take a non-response as lack of interest. Our emails are just too overloaded!!!



Rena J. Pasick, Dr. PH  
Principle Investigator  
UCSF Comprehensive  
Cancer Center



Marjorie Kagawa-Singer, Ph.D.  
Co-Investigator  
UCLA School of Public Health

Missing you all,

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**NEW Online Alumni Survey & Draw. ENTER TO WIN A \$100 VISA GIFT CARD!!!**

A new *shorter* version of the annual alumni survey is currently under development. This survey will enable us to keep abreast of your contact information, career development and plans, and will take considerably less time for you to complete – a WIN WIN for everyone!! Alums who complete the online survey will automatically be entered into a draw to win a \$100 VISA gift card. Stay tuned for email announcements in the upcoming weeks...

### SAVE the DATES!

9th Annual  
MTPCCR  
Careers in  
Cancer Control  
Research  
Summer Institute  
\*\*\*

June 8-12 - UCSF  
June 22-26 - UCLA

# Welcome New MTPCCR Coordinators...



**Pamela Washington**, MPH joined the UCSF team in spring 2006. Prior to transitioning to this position, this 2003 alumna was a research associate at the UCSF Comprehensive Cancer Center. She was recently accepted to the Dr.PH program at UC Berkeley (UCB) School of Public Health where she plans to focus on health disparities in cancer. When not at work, you will find her in her garden, at a yoga studio, hanging out with friends, or cuddled up with her kitty reading a good book.



**Sherry C. M. Kidd** joined the UCLA team in November 2005. Formerly she was the assistant director for a Foster Family Agency. Sherry has a Master's in Education with an emphasis in multicultural counseling from San Diego State University and is a member of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc. When Sherry is not enthusiastically recruiting for this AWESOME program, she is "doing the mom thing" with her two wonderful daughters Taylor and Sydnee, & dog Sunset, cardio kickboxing or just relaxing.

## 2005-2006 DASA Awardees

Doctoral Application Support Awards (DASA) of up to \$2,000 are awarded annually to program alumni who apply to a doctoral program that could lead to a career in cancer control research. Alumni from any program are eligible to apply. Congratulations to the following awardees:

### 2005

Erica Warner (UCSF -2005)  
 Marina Alvarez (UCLA-2003)  
 Yasmin Asvat (UCLA -2005)  
 Darrah Kuratani (UCLA-2003)  
 Claradina Toya-Soto (UCLA-2005)  
 Phyllis Yarbrough (UCLA-2003)

### 2006

Tekeshe Mekonnen (UCSF-2006)  
 Annalyn Valdez (UCSF-2001)  
 Pamela Washington (UCSF-2003)  
 Jennifer Tsui (UCLA-2004)  
 Daisy Carreon (UCLA-2003)  
 Miguel Garcia (UCLA-2005)



*Heartfelt thanks to Linda Rosenstock MD, MPH, Dean of the UCLA School of Public Health, Judy Gasson, Ph.D., Director UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center & Robert Hiatt, MD, Ph.D., UCSF Comprehensive Cancer Center for sponsoring this award.*

## 2006 APHA Alumni Dinner



The American Public Health Association (APHA) annual meeting was held in Boston, MA, November 3-8, 2006. MTPCCR staff and alumni met at Maggiano's Little Italy Restaurant for dinner on Nov. 6th to reminisce and talk about the program. Thanks to Adimika M., Mike S., Kim N., Sherie G., Vanessa W., Trinetta, C., Tracey H., Crystal M., & Antoinette A. for attending. We hope to see everyone in Washington D.C. later this year!!

## MTPCCR FUN FACTS

**THERE ARE 277 ALUMS;  
 46 ARE CURRENTLY IN  
 DOCTORAL PROGRAMS;  
 5 GRADUATED  
 WITH THEIR PH.D;  
 2 ARE POST. DOCS**

## We want to hear from you!!

If there is someone in this newsletter that you wish to get in touch with, an article that you would like us to feature in the future, or if you have an update that you wish to share for the next edition, please let us know.

## JOINING the RANKS: NEW DOCTORAL STUDENTS



**L. Doug Melton, MPH (UCSF-2006)** is a first-year doctoral student in the Health Policy and Administration program at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. His dissertation will most likely focus on the relationship between Medicare reimbursements for rural non-profit hospitals. He admits that his first semester was hectic and at times he was so busy that he forgot to eat!! When not immersed in academia, he enjoys helping others in the community.



**Claradina Soto, MPH (UCLA-2005)** is a first-year doctoral student in the Health Behavior Research program at the University of Southern California (USC) Keck School of Medicine and recipient of the Pre-doctoral Diversity Graduate Fellowship. She has a special interest in the role of culture & tobacco use in American Indian communities and is committed to improving health in her community. She is very appreciative of her supportive husband of 11 years & their 2-year-old daughter who keeps them motivated and active.



**Nicole Kellier, MPH (UCSF-2004)** is a first-year student in the Epidemiology Ph.D. program at Florida International University, Stempel School of Public Health. Her research focus is on cancer in the Caribbean population, specifically prostate cancer among Jamaican men. She received a graduate assistantship and works on research projects conducted in the department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics. She also started a nonprofit organization called Caribbean Health Research Network of South Florida.



**Padmaja Magadala, MS (UCSF-2005)** is a first year student at Northeastern University in Boston where she is pursuing a Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Sciences. She is the recipient of the National Science Foundation (NSF) Integrative Graduate Education and Research Traineeship (IGERT) fellowship. Her dissertation will focus on Pharmaceuticals and Drug Delivery specifically, the combination gene delivery using non-viral nanovector system to target cancer cells. When she is not studying, she enjoys spending time with her husband & 4 ½ year-old daughter.



**Darrah Kuratani, MS (UCLA-2003)** wishes everyone ALOHA. She is currently a Ph.D. student in the Community Health Sciences program at the UCLA School of Public Health where her focus is medical anthropology & cultural competency. Thank you MTPCCR for your unyielding support!!



**Lani Park, MPH (UCLA-2006)** began her Ph.D. program in Epidemiology at the UCLA School of Public Health last fall. Her research focuses on the epidemiology of cancer and she currently works on the Los Angeles County Lung, Head, and Neck Cancer population-based case-control study—a study that examines gene polymorphisms and associations with cancer specific to these sites. Lani's hobbies include: running, reading, watching TV, and eating really good food.



**Barbara Baquero, MPH (UCLA-2004)** began her Ph.D. program in Health Behavior at San Diego State University/UC San Diego in fall '06. She loves San Diego and appreciates working with mentors that she trusts. She says that her MTPCCR experience has been truly validating for her. Her number one tip for MTPCCR alums in doctoral programs or thinking about applying is to choose mentors carefully as they can make a great difference.



**Yasmin Asvat, MA (UCLA-2005)** wanted to be a clinical psychologist since her sophomore year at the University of Toronto. Her dream was realized when she started the doctoral program in Clinical Psychology at the University of South Florida. In addition to coursework, she receives training in psychosocial oncology at the Moffit Cancer Center. Yasmin says, "I am forever indebted to my advisor at SDSU, Dr. Vanessa Malcarne, and to the amazing people at the MTPCCR. My best wishes to the incoming MTPCCR class. You will never forget this experience! If I can ever be of any help, please drop me a line at [yasvat@mail.usf.edu](mailto:yasvat@mail.usf.edu)."



**Marina Alvarez, MPH (UCLA-2003)** wants to let her fellow "MTPCCRs" know that she was accepted to the Dr.PH program at UCLA!!!! This is her first year in the program and she is ecstatic about her new journey. She says, "This accomplishment was made possible by the MTPCCR crew----yes the program and staff have all supported me on this great adventure."



**Monica Rodriguez, MA (UCLA 2005)** is currently enrolled in the Ph.D. program in Medical Anthropology at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Her research interests include immigrant health, chronic disease, and access to health care. In her spare time, she explores her new city & surrounding area.

**Congratulations to all new doctoral students!!**

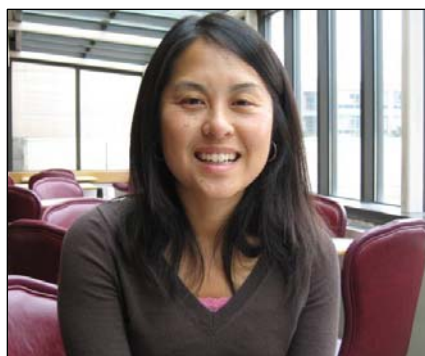
# RECENT GRADUATE



Yumary Ruiz received a Ph.D. in Health Promotion & Disease Prevention-Health Advocacy and Policy from Purdue University in August, 2006. Her dissertation focused on the use of the Internet as a tool for breast cancer advocacy and its association to sociopolitical empowerment. She recently accepted a position as an Assistant Clinical Professor and Director of the Public Health Internship Program at New York University (NYU). Congratulations Dr. Ruiz!!



## Interview with a Post-Doc



*Iona Cheng, Ph.D, MPH, is the first MTPCCR alumnus to return to UCSF as a post-doc. We recently caught-up with her to ask questions about her work and advice on how to find a post-doc position. We look forward to keeping abreast of what will no doubt be a brilliant career for this young researcher.*

### Q: What Projects are you currently working on?

Right now I'm working on three projects related to prostate cancer. One examines genes involved in the inflammatory process and identifies whether different variants or mutations in DNA influence one's risk of getting this type of cancer. The other study is a large multi-ethnic men's cohort study at Kaiser Permanente that involves identifying possible ethnic differences and risk factors. I'm also collaborating on a project with the Northern California Cancer Center (NCCC) that will examine the role of SES among ethnic groups.

### Q: How did you find a post-doc position?

My approach was similar to applying to grad school. I wanted to go someplace where I could learn something new and bring the strengths that I have. I researched schools and faculty who are doing the kind of work that I'm interested in and contacted faculty to introduce myself, express interest in a post-doc position, and enquire about a follow-up conversation. The people I contacted were eager to learn about me and invited me for an interview. Location was also a factor in my search. Ultimately, I had to decide between UCSF and PENN. I really liked the research group at UCSF and wanted to come back to the Bay Area, so I chose UC. I have no regrets.

### Q: What advice would you give students who are looking for post-doc opportunities?

I used to be really hesitant about contacting professors. One time, somebody pointed out that professors like to teach and share ideas with others who are interested in the same things. That really changed my way of thinking. Since then, I haven't been shy about getting in touch with people and I encourage others to do the same. Lots of post-doc opportunities are not advertised so it's important to think of non-traditional ways of finding a position. I recommend researching the web to find a lab or research group you may be interested in and contacting faculty directly. If possible, talk to people who work with faculty in these groups and ask questions about the work environment. It's also important to take into consideration whether faculty are established and/or have had post-docs or grad students working on their projects. The National Cancer Institute is a great resource for published fellowship positions. It's always a good idea to keep an eye out for those opportunities.

### Q: What are your long-term goals?

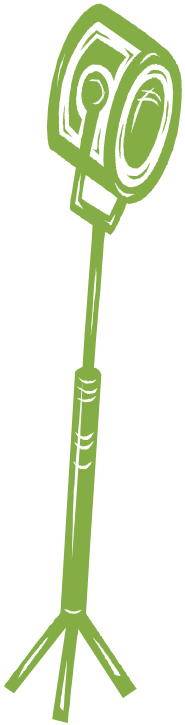
I would like to stay in academia and be an independent researcher. Someday I would like to have my own research group - something to aim for.

### Prostate Cancer Facts

- After lung cancer, prostate cancer is the leading cause of cancer-related deaths among men in the U.S.
- African-American men are 65% more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than Caucasian-Americans and are more likely to die from it.
- The chance of having prostate cancer increases rapidly after age 50. More than 70% of all prostate cancers are diagnosed in men over the age of 65

Source: A Snapshot of Prostate Cancer, National Cancer Institute

# SPOTLIGHT: Alums in Cancer Control



## Health Educator Extraordinaire

**L**ei-Chun Fung, MPH, MSW (UCSF-2003) is a Health Educator at the San Francisco Department of Public Health, Chinatown Public Health Center. Her education, cultural background, and fluency in Cantonese and Mandarin have enabled her to make significant contributions to monolingual Chinese speaking communities in the Bay Area. She is a community advocate, consultant on various research and community projects, and since 1987 has developed many innovative health education programs including Breast Health Days for Chinese American Women, Chinese Women's Cancer Support Group, "Dr Play" Children's Support Group, Tobacco Prevention and Smoking Cessation for Adults and Youth and the Arthritis Education and Self Management Program. She also gives talks on various health-related topics and has appeared on Chinese radio and television shows. Lei-Chun is well known and respected by her colleagues and has won awards for her outstanding contributions to the Chinese community including the Intercultural Cancer Council HOPE Award and the Alta Bates Summit Foundations' Leap of Faith Award. When this health educator extraordinaire is not busy at work, she enjoys spending time with her husband Frances, daughters Esther Pui-Yan, & Tiffany Kay-Yan, and son Thomas Wai-Yan. She even has time to swim and the occasional dim sum lunch with friends.



## Hard Science Meets Public Health

**M**ichael Lipscomb, MS (UCLA-2004) is a second-year graduate student at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine where his research focus is cancer immunology, specifically immuno-therapeutic techniques aimed at reducing, and/or inhibiting cancer onset and growth. He works in Dr. Walter Storkus' lab and is currently involved in two projects. One project examines Dendritic Cell based Vaccine approaches as immunological therapies and treatments to combat cancer onset and progression. The other project targets the angiogenic potentiating ability of tumors to cut off blood supply and reduce the ability of metastasis,

both in blood vessel and lymphatic vessel angiogenesis. Michael is a busy guy. In addition to his graduate coursework in immunology, he is a teaching assistant for undergraduate immunology courses, and is taking classes in Japanese with the intent of pursuing a post-doctoral fellowship in Japan. His long-term goals include obtaining a job in a biotech company solely dedicated to the discovery, development, and delivery of immunotherapeutic treatments/therapies aimed at treating cancer patients and is determined to start his own business should such a company not exist. Believe it or not, he has time for hobbies. Michael is a wicked guitarist, bassist, drummer, and pianist. He also writes music and lyrics! He describes his music style as rock with a twist of funk and soul. Kudos to this superman!

***“Choice, not chance  
determines your destiny”***

*Michael Lipscomb, 1993*

## Where Are They Now?



**Michael Sanchez, MPH (UCSF-2004)** was awarded the Bonderman Honors Travel Fellowship, a prestigious fellowship that provides recipients the opportunity to travel the world and explore a particular passion or curiosity. Mike explored the world through food. Yes, food. He collected recipes from around the world in

order to increase his understanding and appreciation of various cultures. Since this globetrotter returned to the U.S., he learned that his master's thesis ["Factors Influencing Prostate Cancer Screening Decisions Among African-American Men"] was accepted for publication, with him as the first author!! His article will be published in Volume 17, No 2 of *Ethnicity & Disease*.



**Sherie Graham, MPH (UCSF-2006)** completed her masters degree from the University of Michigan in 2005. This native of Philadelphia, recently accepted a program evaluation coordinator position with the Center for Obesity Research and Education at Temple University. In her new role, she coordinates and oversees all aspects of the evaluation of the Eat.Right.Now (ERN)

program- a school-based nutrition education program administered to students in grades K through 12 in the Philadelphia School District.



**Candace Webb, MPH (UCLA-2006)** graduated from the University of South Florida with in December 2006. She currently works at the AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth & Families in Washington D.C.—a national, nonprofit public health organization that gives voice to the needs of women, children, youth and families living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. She is

enjoying her transition from Florida to our nation's capital and in her spare time likes to explore D.C. and surrounding areas.



**Miguel Garcia, MS (UCLA-2005)** is a biostatistician at the American College of Radiology in Philadelphia where he works on a cancer control clinical trial for breast, gynecological and gastrointestinal disease sites. He recently completed the Kaplan GRE prep. course and is applying to Ph.D. programs for Fall '07 admission. Miguel is also training for the Philadelphia Triathlon as a member of The

Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Team in Training. If you would like to support him, please visit his website at <http://www.active.com/donate/tntepa/migueltgarciajr>.



**Sabrina Smiley, MPH (UCLA-2006)** works at the Milwaukee Health Department and Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin where she is responsible for coordinating sexual health projects. She is also in her first year of a two-year Population Health Fellowship

program at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.



**Suepattra May, MPH (UCSF-2003)** is a graduate of the University of Washington and is currently a third-year student in the UC Berkeley/UC San Francisco joint doctoral program in medical anthropology. This past July, she participated in an intensive four week Summer Institute on Sexuality, Culture and Society at the University of Amsterdam (Netherlands). In August, Suepattra headed

back to the U.S. to participate in another intensive summer program, this time at the University of California Humanities Research Institute (UCHRI) housed at UC Irvine. The third annual Seminar in Experimental Critical Theory (SECT) focused on how humans engage with one another through technology. She plans to combine her interest in cancer, sexuality, and technology for her dissertation project beginning this year.



**Ricardo Lopez (UCLA-2006)** feels strongly that the MTPCCR provides invaluable educational and hands on experience through its internship opportunities. Right now he is gaining experience as an MTP intern at UCLA's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control Research! He plans to graduate from Cal. State University, Fullerton with an MPH (emphasis on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention) this year and is currently working on his thesis entitled: College-Age Men's Perception & Knowledge of Human Papillomavirus and Cervical Cancer in a Multi-Ethnic Population. He looks forward to applying to Dr.PH programs in the future. Thank you MTPCCR!!



**Michelle Wong, MPH (UCLA-2006)** completed her degree from the University of Southern California (USC) in 2006. She is currently a research associate at Cal. State University, Fullerton working in the area of cancer prevention research in minority communities, including the Pacific Islander community. She is truly passionate about her work and is thinking about applying to doctoral programs in the

future. She recently traveled to Thailand as a member of an international student organization group and continues to support the MTPCCR as a campus advisor/recruiter. In her words, "I can't stop raving about the program!!"



**Ying Han (UCSF-2006)** is a second-year student in the master of public health program at Oregon Health and Science University (OSHU). She recently enrolled in a program called Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (LEND) and began her traineeship in Fall 2006. Go Ying!!



**Cynthia Gary, MPH (UCLA-2006)** has been accepted to the Physician Assistant (PA) program at Duke University and Emory University!! She is also considering taking a few distance classes towards a Ph.D. in Public Health while completing her PA program. Congratulations Cynthia!

# Summer Institute Class Photos

## 2005



**UCSF**

## 2006



**UCSF**



**UCLA**



**UCLA**

## Upcoming Events

### 3rd Annual C.O.R.I.C.A Symposium

May 22nd, 2007, Los Angeles  
[www.jccf.mednet.ucla.edu/corica](http://www.jccf.mednet.ucla.edu/corica)

### AVON Walk for Breast Cancer

July 7th & 8th, 2007, San Francisco  
[www.walk.avonfoundation.com](http://www.walk.avonfoundation.com)

### California Breast Cancer Research Symposium

September 7th-9th, 2007, Los Angeles  
[www.cbcrp.org/symposium](http://www.cbcrp.org/symposium)

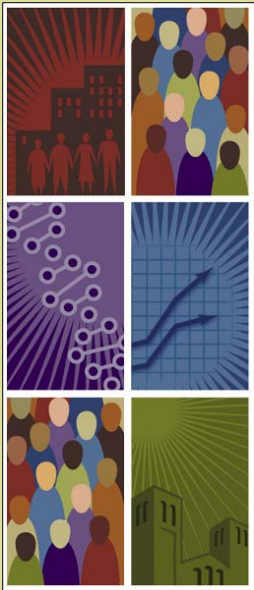
## SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS



I am so proud to inform you that our own Pamela Washington has received the Chancellor's Award at UC Berkeley. An alum of the 2003 MTPCCR, Pamela was my intern that summer. She became so interested in our research project that we decided to write an application for an NCI

Minority Supplement which was awarded two years in a row, enabling her to develop and complete her own small study.

The Admissions Committee for the UCB doctoral program nominated Pamela for the Chancellor's award based on the strength of her application, and she is the WINNER. The Chancellor's award provides 4 years tuition, fees, and a stipend!! Congratulations Pamela!!!! -rjp



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