



## CLASS OF 2024!

Congratulations to our former RISE trainees, Elliott Rodríguez, Luis A. Rivera, and John K. Alvarado, on their graduation! The Commencement Ceremony was held on June 5<sup>th</sup> at the Hilton Ponce Gulf & Casino Resort.

Elliott is currently working as a Microbiology Teaching Assistant at the Ponce Health Sciences University (PHSU), with goals of transitioning to Industry. Meanwhile, John is also working at PHSU as a Biochemistry and Physiology Teaching Assistant on courses for the Medicine Deanship, and as Instructor for the Biochemistry summer class.

Luis is collaborating with Dr. Richard Noel, Chair of our Basic Sciences Department, supporting the academic area. He aims to transition to a scientific role within the biotech/pharma industry. Our faculty and staff are immensely proud of you! We wish you immense success in your future endeavors. Bravo!



## HERMANSKY PUDLAK SYNDROME (HPS) NETWORK FAMILY CONFERENCE 2024

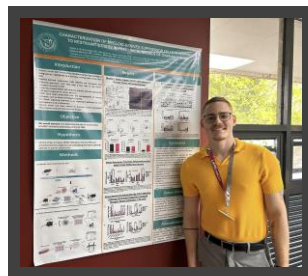
The HPS Conference was held on May 5<sup>th</sup> at the Mayaguez Resort & Casino Puerto Rico. The mission of the HPS Network is to provide education and vital support programs to individuals and families with Hermansky-Pudlak syndrome while striving for improved care and innovative research on their journey to a cure.

A highlight of their calendar is a medical symposium for the scientists/physicians that are actively involved in HPS research. This meeting is a hallmark of their research agenda which provides a venue of collaboration and innovation to advance HPS science and is the only one of its kind in the world.

Under the mentorship of Dr. Wilfredo De Jesús and Dr. Marcos Ramos, Lourdes Marina Caro (1<sup>st</sup> year G-RISE trainee) attended this conference and delivered an excellent oral presentation on her research work titled "Cytokine Profile in Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Type 1: Assessing Differences After the Fourth Decade of Life". Congratulations, Lourdes Marina, well done!



## FIRST REGIONAL CONGRESS OF CANCER IMMUNOLOGY AND IMMUNOTHERAPY



Kudos to Yadiel Rivera (3<sup>rd</sup> year G-RISE trainee) for his outstanding work! Under the mentorship of Dr. Guillermo Armaiz, he has been presenting his research on ovarian cancer in various local and national forums. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, he showcased his poster titled "Characterization of Myeloid-Derived Suppressor Cells in Response to Restraint Stress in Preclinical Models of Ovarian Cancer" at the First Regional Congress of Cancer Immunology and Immunotherapy held at the University of Puerto Rico in Humacao. Keep up the great work, Yadiel!

## BIOMEDICAL SEMINAR SERIES

Congratulations to Yobet Pérez (4<sup>th</sup> year G-RISE trainee) for delivering an excellent seminar titled 'Influence of fear conditioning prior to cocaine self-administration on cocaine seeking in adult rats' on May 5<sup>th</sup>, as part of our Biomedical Seminar Series.

Keep up the good job, Yobet!





## G-RISE LAB WEBINAR



Travis Hardcastle, MS

On Friday May 10, 2024, the G-RISE Trainees attended the webinar titled **“Beyond CRISPR Basics: Molecular Biology Innovations in Cell Engineering”** presented by Travis Hardcastle, MS from Synthego. During this webinar, the Trainees had the opportunity to hear a brief historical overview of CRISPR and its evolution into the current gene engineering technique. They also learned how CRISPR empowers the precision and efficiency of gene editing and reviewed the synergy between CRISPR and various molecular biology methods and DNA modification. The Trainees had the opportunity to gain an understanding of innovations in gene editing methods and how engineered cells are being used in research and industry. This workshop webinar was designed as a self-paced activity and the Trainees answered a short post-test to assess their understanding of the subject presented during the webinar.

(By: Dr. Grissell Tirado, G-RISE Lab Supervisor)

## 13<sup>TH</sup> SCIENTIFIC DAY OF THE HISPANIC ALLIANCE FOR CLINICAL AND TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

The Hispanic Alliance for Clinical and Translational Research is a partnership between the three major academic health sciences centers on the Island: the University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus, Universidad Central del Caribe, and Ponce Health Sciences University. Its objective is to develop and support an integrated, island-wide program focused on conducting clinical and translational research across Puerto Rico to address prevalent diseases and those that affect the medically underserved population.

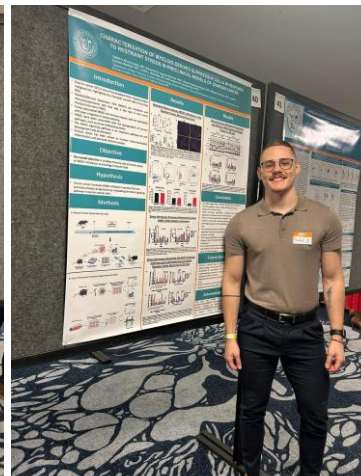
The Alliance’s 13<sup>th</sup> Scientific Day 2024 was held on May 8<sup>th</sup> at the Royal Sonesta San Juan. This year’s theme was “The Alliance: Responding to Climate Change through Clinical and Translational Research.”

We warmly congratulate our trainees who presented their science and exchanged knowledge and collaboration at this important event. They are Joel Orengo (2<sup>nd</sup> year), Yadiel Rivera (3<sup>rd</sup> year), Paola Flores (3<sup>rd</sup> year) and Dorca Marcano (1<sup>st</sup> year).

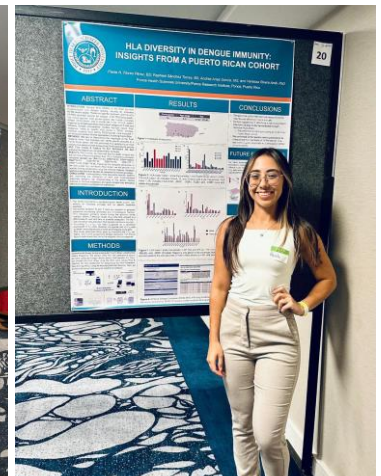
Great job!



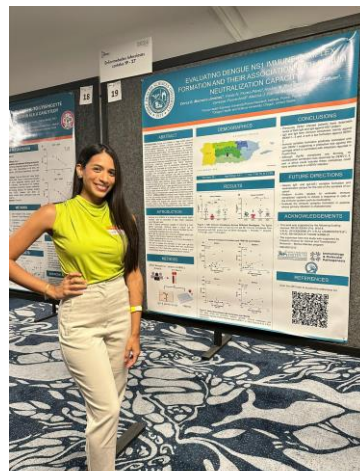
Joel Orengo



Yadiel Rivera



Paola Flores



Dorca Marcano

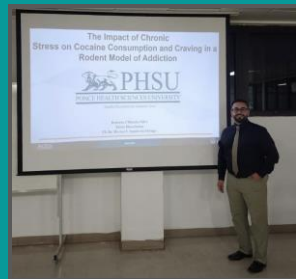


Lourdes Caro (1<sup>st</sup> year G-RISE trainee), Yadiel Rivera, Dr. Alexandra Aquino, Melanie Cruz



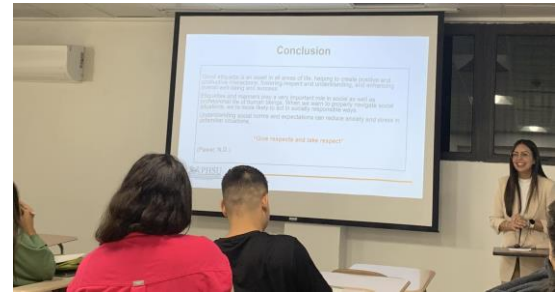
## THESIS DEFENSES

A huge congratulations to our former RISE trainee (and IAC member), Roberto J. Morales, as well as to Jessalyn Pla, on successfully defending their theses! Roberto's project, titled "The Impact of Chronic Stress on Cocaine Consumption and Craving in a Rodent Model of Addiction," has shed important light on the intricate relationship between stress and addiction. Jessalyn's project, titled "Interaction of HIV-Nef and Glutamate Homeostasis in the Nucleus Accumbens During Cocaine Addiction," explores the complex interplay between HIV and addiction. We are immensely proud of their dedication, hard work, and significant contributions to their fields. We look forward to seeing all the incredible things they will achieve in the future! Special thanks to their mentors, Dr. Richard Noel and Dr. Marian Sepúlveda, for their guidance and support throughout Roberto's and Jessalyn's research journey. Congratulations Dr. Morales-Silva and Dr. Pla-Tenorio! Bravo!



## THE POWER OF PROFESSIONAL ETIQUETTE: KEYS TO CAREER SUCCESS

On May 17<sup>th</sup>, our PHSU Rehabilitation Counselor, Mrs. Grace M. Morales, MSS, LRC, delivered an exceptional Professional Development session on "The Power of Professional Etiquette: Keys to Career Success." She provided our trainees with a comprehensive understanding of how professional etiquette can enhance their careers. Topics covered included: Definition and Importance of Professional Etiquette; Impact on Career Success and Workplace Culture; Communication Skills; Interview Etiquette; Business and Smart Attire Dress Codes; Workplace Conduct; Dining Etiquette and Netiquette, which are the rules for respectful and appropriate online communication. Her insights were valuable, and our trainees appreciated her time and expertise. Feedback from students stated that the session was incredibly enlightening and that her tips and practical advice were particularly useful.



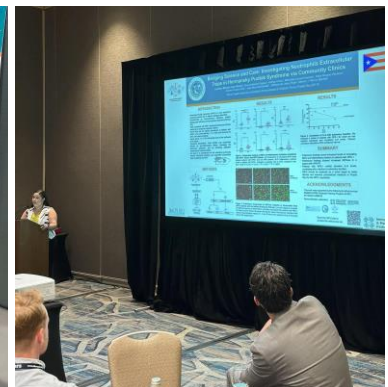
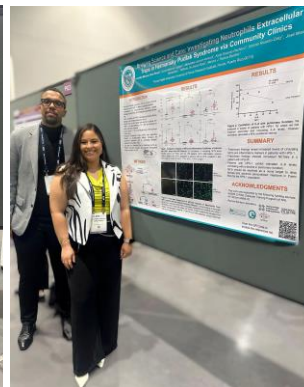
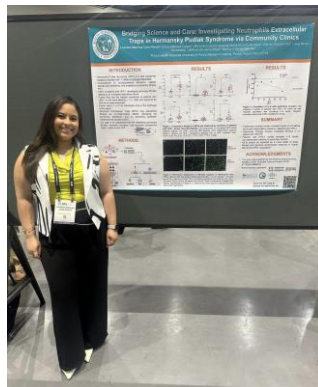
## THE AMERICAN THORACIC SOCIETY (ATS) MEETING 2024

We are thrilled to congratulate our first-year G-RISE trainee, Lourdes M. Caro, for her outstanding contributions at the American Thoracic Society (ATS) Meeting in San Diego, CA, from May 17-22, 2024!

Under the mentorship of Dr. Marcos Ramos, Lourdes presented her research poster titled "Bridging Science and Care: Investigating Neutrophils Extracellular Traps in Hermansky Pudlak Syndrome via Community Clinics."

Lourdes not only presented her research in poster format but also delivered an oral presentation at a private meeting with the American Thoracic Society Public Advisory Roundtable (ATS-PAR). She also received the ATS-PAR Award from Donna Appell, RN, Executive Director, and Founder of the Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Network.

Her dedication and hard work are truly inspiring, and we are incredibly proud of her achievements. Keep shining, Lourdes!





## OUTREACH

Kudos to our trainees and graduate students on their Outreach efforts! Coordinated by the Graduate Student Association of Biomedical Sciences (GSABS), they continue to share their knowledge by conducting organ demonstrations and giving talks about graduate studies (Ph.D.) to students of various levels. Excellent job, everyone. Your dedication to sharing knowledge is truly inspiring!



Yadiel Rivera (3<sup>rd</sup> year), Luinet Meléndez (2<sup>nd</sup> year), James Torres & Lourdes Caro (1<sup>st</sup> year)-Liceo Ponceño School, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024.



Nashaly Irizarry (4<sup>th</sup> year), Luinet Meléndez and Joel Orenge (2<sup>nd</sup> year).-UPR-BIOTECH Summer Experience 2024, June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2024.

## 12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PHSU G-RISE PROGRAM RETREAT

Our RISE Program held its 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Philosophy of Science Retreat on May 30-31, 2024, at Marina de Salinas Hotel Restaurant in Salinas, PR. The theme for this year's retreat was 'Navigating the PhD Journey.' Our retreat goals were as follows: to provide trainees with comprehensive support for various aspects of the doctoral experience, identify common challenges at different stages and offer resources and strategies to overcome them, explore essential skills for successfully navigating the PhD journey, share faculty members' personal experiences as role models, foster a sense of community and collaboration among trainees, G-RISE staff, and faculty, help trainees stay motivated, focused, and connected to a supportive academic community and encourage reflection on best practices and build resilience skills.

The agenda included the following talks: *The PhD Experience: Opportunities and Challenges* by a Faculty Panel; *Qigong & Yoga for Mental Health Resilience* by Clinical Psychologist and holistic therapist, Dr. Legna Vargas; *Effective Time Management and Organization* by our G-RISE Program Director, Dr. Caroline Appleyard; *Balancing Personal and Professional Life* by Dr. Guillermo Armaiz; *Trainee Discussion* (Retreat Reflection). The group also gathered for interactive activities and teambuilding games, and we received very good feedback from the trainees.



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