

# Network of Minority Health Research Investigators

NMRI News  
*Fall 2013*



National Institute of  
Diabetes and Digestive  
and Kidney Diseases

# Network of Minority Health Research Investigators

## FALL 2013 NEWSLETTER



### A MESSAGE FROM DR. AGODOA

The Network of Minority Health Research Investigators (NMRI) was established in 2002 through the Office of Minority Health Research Coordination (OMHRC) of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) to establish a communication network of minority biomedical research investigators. The objective of the NMRI is to address the impact of health disparities on disease in minority populations and promote the success of minority faculty members at academic institutions who contribute greatly to biomedical research, particularly in the fields of diabetes, endocrinology, metabolism, digestive diseases, nutrition, and kidney, urologic, and hematologic diseases.

The Network's most important asset is its members. The dedicated mentoring efforts of senior members help to advance the careers of junior investigators; when junior members are successful because of mentoring, the NMRI is successful. The NMRI belongs to its members, who determine Network priorities, accomplish NMRI objectives, and participate at the level they can. Building and maintaining NMRI membership and participation will continue to add value to the Network.

The NIDDK's successful NMRI program has served as a model for an NIH-wide mentoring project called Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD), which was initiated following the publication of the NIH Diversity Task Force Report in 2012. The funding will support BUILD scholars as well as graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and junior faculty.

In this era of financial restrictions, it is important to collectively identify ways to leverage available resources to continue to provide high-quality support to NMRI members. Recently, NIDDK awarded five grants to professional societies for the development of minority programs. This effort and others will ensure that minority biomedical investigators continue to receive the support that they need to advance their important research and reduce health disparities.

*Lawrence Agodoa, M.D., F.A.C.P.*  
*Director, Office of Minority Health*  
*Research Coordination, NIDDK/NIH*

### SAVE THE DATE:

*Announcing the*  
*NMRI 12th Annual Workshop*  
*April 14–15, 2014, Bethesda, MD*  
<http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/workshops>



National Institute of  
Diabetes and Digestive  
and Kidney Diseases

## Report From the NMRI 11th Annual Workshop

**N**MRI members from 20 states and Puerto Rico participated in the NMRI 11th Annual Workshop, held April 18–19, 2013. NMRI member **Carmen Castaneda-Sceppa, M.D., Ph.D.**, Northeastern University, chaired the meeting, which was held at the Pooks Hill Marriott in Bethesda, MD.

NIDDK Director **Griffin Rodgers, M.D.**, welcomed the participants and thanked the program advisors, who represent a group of dedicated individuals working toward a common goal. Now in its 11th year, the NMRI has been very successful as judged by common metrics. Dr. Rodgers acknowledged the challenging budget climate and commented that the NMRI is an inspiring program that will be prioritized, especially because many diseases and disorders disproportionately affect specific racial groups. He congratulated the participants for their great work, promotions, awards, and key publications. Dr. Rodgers indicated that the NMRI members are role models and should endeavor to share their experiences about the paths navigated and successes achieved. He encouraged fellowship during the meeting and commented that the next major discovery is likely to come from the participants and their trainees or mentees. The Director of NIDDK's Office of Minority Health Research Coordination (OMHRC), **Lawrence Agodoa, M.D.**, also welcomed the attendees and expressed appreciation to the senior mentors, who drive the success of the Network through the mentoring of junior members.

### CAREER AND FUNDING STRATEGIES

**William Pearce, Ph.D.**, Loma Linda University Medical Center, presented the Keynote Address on "Science Careers in the Coming Decade: Challenges, Opportunities, and the Importance of Innovation." Dr. Pearce described the current revolution in the education of medical and scientific professionals, and he noted the dramatic shift that has occurred in medical schools, which now encourage small classes, limited didactic lectures, and additional clinical experience. He informed participants of

**"NMRI has been incredibly useful for the development of collaborations."**

**—NMRI Member**

the NIH's Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BEST) program, which is designed to support new approaches to broaden graduate and postdoctoral training. Dr. Pearce reviewed the various careers pursued by graduate students, including the traditional career path of academic science as well nonacademic research and nonresearch science careers. He observed that less traditional career sectors provide many opportunities for students to achieve rewarding and successful careers.

**Sharon Milgram, Ph.D.**, Director of the NIH's Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE), delivered numerous helpful tactics in her presentation on "Strategies for Grant Writing Success."

She emphasized that grant applicants will decrease their stress level and have more time to focus on their research if they take the time to understand the grant writing process, from the first idea to the final outcome. Dr. Milgram explained the grant review process from the perspective of reviewers and detailed the journey of an application from submission to award. Understanding the process from start to finish can help applicants prepare and submit a grant with the highest chance of funding success. Dr. Milgram pointed attendees to several websites that can assist with understanding the NIH's funding process:

- ▶ NIH OITE website, available at [www.training.nih.gov](http://www.training.nih.gov).
- ▶ NIH Office of Extramural Research, available at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/oe.htm>.
- ▶ Applications are uploaded at [www.grants.nih.gov](http://www.grants.nih.gov).
- ▶ The RePORTER website, available at <http://report.nih.gov/index.aspx>, contains a list of all funded projects.
- ▶ The NIH Institutes and Centers most relevant to the applicant's research can be identified at [www.nih.gov/icd](http://www.nih.gov/icd).

### NETWORKING LUNCH— ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

During the networking lunch session, the meeting participants attended one of six roundtable discussions, each of which focused on a different career-oriented topic. Subjects included career development, building collaborations, effective mentoring, using national datasources,

publishing manuscripts, and leadership techniques. The discussions were led by **Sharon Milgram, Ph.D.**, NIH; **Carlos Isales, M.D.**, Georgia Regents University; **Jackie Tanaka, Ph.D.**, Temple University; **Bessie Young, M.D.**, University of Washington; **Keith Norris, M.D.**, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science; and **Eddie Greene, M.D.**, Mayo Clinic.

### MOCK STUDY SECTIONS

Mock study sections allowed participants to gain insight into how their basic, clinical, and K award applications are reviewed and ranked. These sections are always among the most well-attended and informative sessions at the NMRI workshops. This year's mock study sections were hosted by NIDDK Scientific Review Officers **Ann Jerkins, Ph.D.**; **Maria Davila-Bloom, Ph.D.**; and **Michele Barnard, Ph.D.**; and chaired by **Marina Ramirez-Alvarado, Ph.D.**, Mayo Clinic; **Susanne Nicholas, M.D.**, University of California, Los Angeles; and **Tesfaye Mersha, Ph.D.**, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center.

### ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

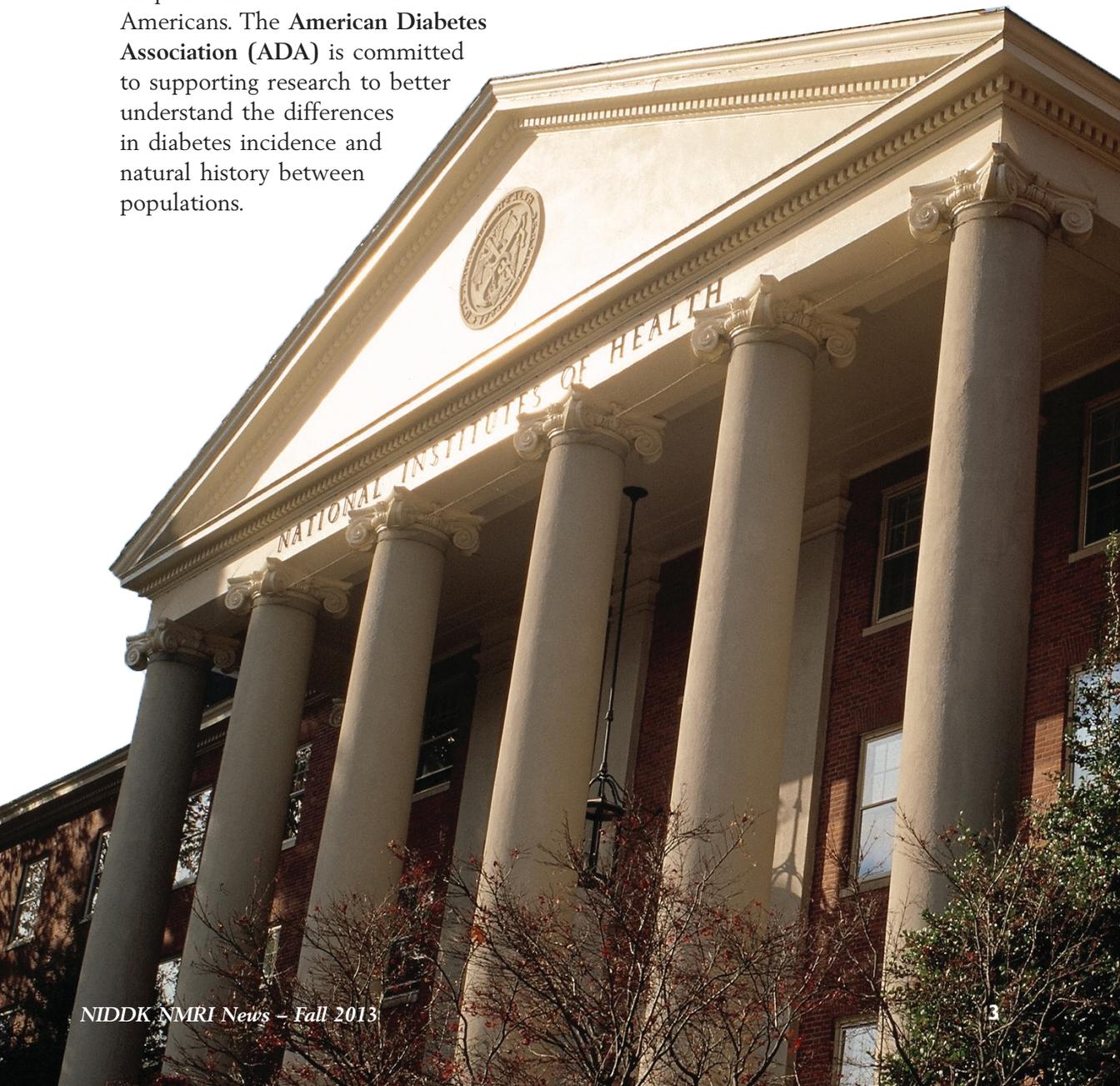
Participants heard about the role of scientific societies and professional organizations of relevance to the NMRI:

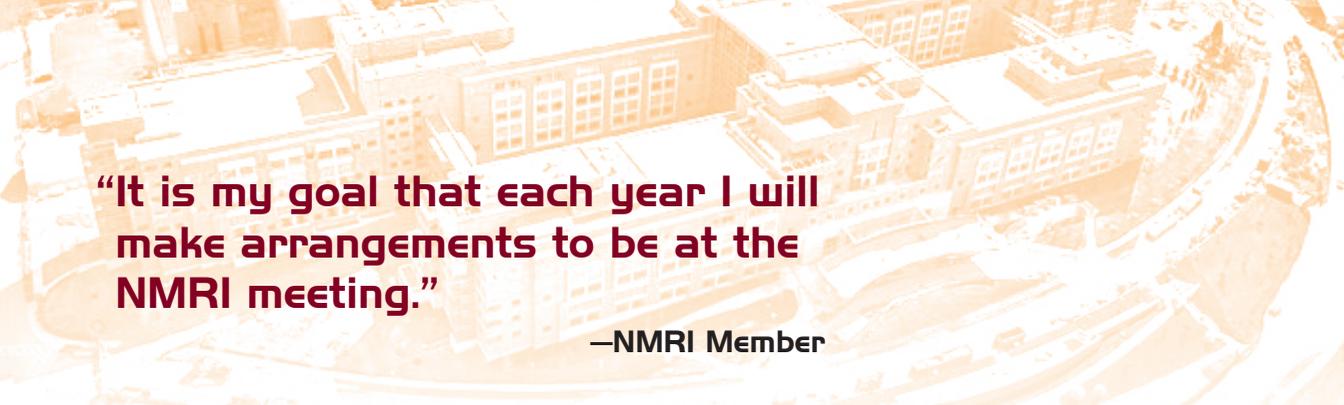
- ▶ **Natasha Brown, Ph.D.**, University of Maryland, spoke about the **Society for African American Public Health Issues (SAAPHI)**, which is a nonprofit national public health organization comprised of researchers, physicians, and health advocates dedicated to improving the overall health of African Americans. Dr. Brown provided contact information

for the SAAPHI listserv (<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SAAPHI>), Twitter (@S\_A\_A\_P\_H\_I), blog (<http://saaphi.wordpress.com>), Facebook (SAAPHI), and website (<http://www.saaphi.org>).

- ▶ **Robert Ratner, M.D.**, explained that 26 million people in the United States have diabetes. The population with the highest incidence is American Indians, followed by Hispanic Americans and African Americans. The **American Diabetes Association (ADA)** is committed to supporting research to better understand the differences in diabetes incidence and natural history between populations.

- ▶ **Shirley Malcom, Ph.D.**, spoke about the **American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)** and its efforts to introduce audiences to the science related to health disparities by being attentive to context, populations, and language; making the science accessible; and approaching people where they live. The AAAS' programs promote the value of education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).





**“It is my goal that each year I will make arrangements to be at the NMRI meeting.”**

**—NMRI Member**

### DINNER ADDRESS

The dinner address was presented by **Denice Cora-Bramble, M.D.**, Children’s National Medical Center. Dr. Cora-Bramble discussed the meaning of being a minority in academia; as the first minority and first woman to serve as Chief Medical Officer (CMO) of the Children’s National Medical Center, she expressed pride as well as a sense of responsibility. She explained that diversity in research is important for many reasons. For example, minority physicians tend to be more likely to practice in underserved areas and provide service to minority populations, and there is evidence that ethnic concordance can be beneficial to the doctor-patient relationship and positively influence health outcomes. Literature supports the notion that a diverse learning environment enhances the educational experience and promotes new ideas. Challenges include the lower rate of promotion for minority researchers and low job satisfaction. Dr. Cora-Bramble addressed issues of recruitment and retention of minority faculty members, acknowledging that being the first and only minority in an institution can be a challenge. She closed her presentation with a reading of her poem, “Fitful Tango,” which was published in *Academic Medicine* (2008).

### INTERACTIVE WORKSHOPS

Interactive mini-workshops provide opportunities to learn and apply skills

and tips to various topics. This year’s workshop topics included transitioning to leadership/administrative positions in academia, strategies for conflict resolution, and developing an award-winning publication. They were led by **Carlos Isales, M.D.**, Georgia Regents University; **Sharon Milgram, Ph.D.**, NIH; and **Bessie Young, M.D.**, University of Washington.

### JUNIOR INVESTIGATOR PRESENTATIONS

Several NMRI members presented the results of their research investigating the effect of bioactive compounds on insulin resistance, patient adherence, and the link between diabetes and sleep. The scientific presentations included:

- ▶ **Diana Obanda, Ph.D.**, Louisiana State University, for “Bioactive Compounds of *Artemisia dracuncululus* L Mitigate Obesity-induced Insulin Resistance in Rat Skeletal Muscle Cells.”
- ▶ **Kenrik Duru, M.D.**, University of California, Los Angeles, for “The Medicare Part D Low-income Cost Subsidy (LICS) and Adherence to Medications for Secondary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease.”
- ▶ **Chandra Jackson, Ph.D.**, Harvard School of Public Health, for “The Association Between Sleep Duration and Diabetes Between Black and White Adults.”

## Marco Cabrera Poster Contest Winners Announced

This year, 21 posters were submitted to the Dr. Marco Cabrera poster contest. They represented outstanding research being conducted at numerous academic institutions for NMRI members. Poster abstracts included research on diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and kidney disease; obesity; and basic research investigations on proteins, lipids, and genes or gene products.

Each poster was assessed for content, presentation, and the presenter's response to questions. Awards were presented for exemplary poster presentations in two areas—Basic and Clinical/

Translational Science. Congratulations to the winners:

*Basic Science:* **Frankie Heyward**, University of Alabama at Birmingham, for the presentation "Impaired Hippocampus-dependent Spatial Memory and Reduced Hippocampal SIRT1 Gene Expression in Diet-induced Obese Mice."

*Clinical/Translational Science:* **Ayotunde Dokun, M.D., Ph.D.**, University of Virginia, for the presentation "Glycemic Control Impacts Outcomes in Peripheral Arterial Disease: Role of Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor Receptor 2 Modulation."

## News From the NMRI Oversight Committee

The Oversight Committee meets three times per year by conference call and in person at the Annual Workshop. Because the status of the NMRI Annual Workshop was uncertain for an extended time, the Committee met fewer times this year. The Committee includes 10 members from various constituencies of the NMRI who serve 2-year terms, and NMRI members are encouraged to serve on the Committee.

**José Romero, Ph.D.**, Oversight Committee Chair, described the NMRI's focus on facilitating active mentorship between senior and junior members based on research, professional interest, and goals. The mentorship program's effectiveness

will be determined by evaluations of success in grant funding, promotions, tenure, leadership, and teaching. In addition, the Oversight Committee has developed a focus group to develop ideas on how to recruit new members and retain current NMRI members.

NMRI program evaluation statistics from 2009 to 2012 were shared at the Annual Workshop (annual reports are available at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/membership/questionnaire.aspx>). Attendees were polled during the 2013 meeting, and 90 percent of participants are Assistant or Associate Professors, with an average income of approximately \$115,000. Members are

encouraged to consistently report publications, presentations, grants, tenure, and promotions by completing a survey on the NMRI website.

The Oversight Committee is considering submitting a U01 grant application to fund next year's NMRI meeting, scheduled for April 14–15, 2014.

**“I appreciate the encouragement I have gotten from all NMRI members, but especially from my mentors.”**

**—NMRI Member**

## The NMRI on the Web



The NMRI website contains a number of resources for members, including:

- ▶ Career development resources for junior investigators, including NIH grant application writing tips, peer review processes, and additional minority programs, are available at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/resources>.
- ▶ Mentors and mentees can be requested by downloading the request form at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/mentor/index.aspx>.
- ▶ The NMRI Membership Directory can be accessed at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/membership/directory.aspx>.
- ▶ Workshops and meetings are announced at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/workshops>. Please visit this site for more information about future meetings as well as to access past meeting reports and presentations.
- ▶ The NMRI Member Questionnaire, which provides the Oversight Committee with insight into member research interests, publications, grants, and promotions, is available at [http://www.scgcorp.com/NMRI Questionnaire](http://www.scgcorp.com/NMRIQuestionnaire). Members are encouraged to complete the questionnaire annually to provide feedback on NMRI services and update publications and awards. Results of previous surveys are available at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/membership/questionnaire.aspx>.
- ▶ Previous NMRI Newsletters are available at <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/newsletters/index.aspx>.

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## NMRI Frequently Asked Questions

### WHAT ARE THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE NMRI?

Membership in the NMRI is available only to investigators who are: (1) at the postgraduate doctoral level or higher; (2) interested in minority health research, including individuals from traditionally underserved communities: African American, Hispanic American, American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders; (3) conducting research in diabetes; endocrinology; metabolism; nutrition; or digestive, kidney, urologic, or hematologic diseases; and (4) U.S. citizens or have permanent resident status.

In addition, medical students from underrepresented minority groups are welcome to attend NMRI meetings if they are conducting research in one of the NIDDK mission areas noted above.

### HOW CAN I BECOME A MEMBER OF THE NMRI?

Individuals who qualify should apply for NMRI membership on the NMRI website. Go to <http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov> and click “NMRI Membership Criteria Form,” located on the right side of the home page.

### WHOM DO I CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NMRI?

Direct questions or comments to NIDDK staff member Ms. Winnie Martinez, who oversees the NMRI. She can be reached via email at [martinezw@mail.nih.gov](mailto:martinezw@mail.nih.gov).

### DOES THE NMRI HAVE A WEBSITE WITH MORE INFORMATION?

The NMRI maintains a website and updates it frequently (<http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov>). The website contains information about the NMRI, including meeting announcements, NIDDK funding opportunities, the NMRI Membership Directory, and summary reports on past NMRI meetings. NMRI members can access the NMRI Member Survey on the website as well.

### IF I AM AN NMRI MEMBER, HOW CAN I FIND A MENTOR?

The NMRI Mentor Program was established by the Oversight Committee, which maintains a list of NMRI members who have volunteered to serve as mentors. The biographies and research interests of NMRI members are listed in the NMRI Membership Directory (<http://nmri.niddk.nih.gov/memberships>), which is useful for identifying potential mentors.

### IF I AM AN NMRI MEMBER, HOW DO I SIGN UP TO BE A MENTOR?

An NMRI member who wants to volunteer as a mentor should go to the NMRI website and click the “NMRI Mentor/Mentee Program” link on the right side of the page to find instructions on becoming a mentor.

**“One of my goals is to be a successful academic endocrinologist who will be a role model for the next generation of Hispanic investigators.”**

**—NMRI Member**

## Snapshot of NMRI Members

### ACADEMIC STATUS OF NMRI MEMBERS

Faculty Member – 85%

Researcher – 4%

Director – 11%

### WHAT MOTIVATES MEMBERS TO ATTEND THE NMRI ANNUAL WORKSHOP?

Networking opportunities

Mentorship opportunities

Leadership opportunities

Identifying collaborations

Opportunities for oral or poster presentations

Assistance in applying for promotion or tenure

Enhancing grant or manuscript writing skills

Developing management skills

Enhancing evaluation portfolio

Interacting with NIH staff

Opportunity to advise young researchers

### HOW HAS NMRI HELPED WITH CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND MENTORING?

Found collaborator(s)

Found mentor(s)

Helped with success in grant application

Helped with success in manuscript publication

Helped develop management skills

Assisted in applying for promotion or tenure

Motivation by seeing role models of people from ethnic groups

Moral support

Identifying a grant

Diversity supplement

Networking and developing leadership skills

Inspirational to meet other minority faculty doing wonderful things

Encouragement for research endeavors

Help to identify mentoring opportunities

Members are encouraged to send reports of their promotions, publications, and successful grant awards to Ms. Winnie Martinez, NIDDK, at [martinezw@mail.nih.gov](mailto:martinezw@mail.nih.gov).

## NMRI 11th Annual Workshop Poster Abstracts

*Emilyn Alejandro*: Mechanistic Target of Rapamycin (mTOR) Signaling Contributes to Developmental Programming of Glucose Intolerance

*Larry Alexander*: Cyclic Stretch-induced Prostaglandin E2 and Nf-Kb Regulates Il-6 Production in Kidney Epithelial Cells

*Lynda Brown*: Comparison of DEXA and QMR for Assessing Fat and Lean Body Mass in Adult Rats

*Kirk Campbell*: YAP Promotes Cell Survival by Inhibiting Pro-apoptotic Dendrin Signaling

*April Carson*: Hemoglobin A1C and Progression of Coronary Artery Calcification Among Individuals Without Diabetes

*Ayotunde Dokun*: Glycemic Control Impacts Outcomes in Peripheral Arterial Disease: Role of Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor Receptor 2 Modulation

*O. Kenrik Duru*: The Medicare Part D Low-income Cost Subsidy (LICS) and Adherence to Medications for Secondary Prevention of Cardiovascular Disease

*Brandi Franklin*: Novel Use of Allied Health Personnel and Computerized Protocols to Enhance Pediatric Diabetes Self-management

*Frankie Heyward*: Impaired Hippocampus-dependent Spatial Memory and Reduced Hippocampal SIRT1 Gene Expression in Diet-induced Obese Mice

*Chandra Jackson*: Sleep Duration and Diabetes in Black and White Adults

*Mary Frances Lopez*: Insulin-like Growth Factor II Deficiency Is Associated With Hepatic Steatosis and Decreased Lipocalin 13 Gene Expression

*Leon McDougle*: A Patient and Physician Online Health Tool for Older African Americans

*Darren Moore*: Life After Bariatric Surgery: Men's Perspectives on Self-concept, Intimate Relationships, and Social Support

*Olubukola Nafiu*: Association of Weight Status and Neck Circumference With Elevated Blood Pressure in a Pediatric Surgical Population

*Benjamin Nwosu*: The Effect of Vitamin D Supplementation on Glycemic Control in Patients With Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes

*Diana Obanda*: Bioactive Compounds of *Artemisia dracuncululus L* Mitigate Obesity-induced Insulin Resistance in Rat Skeletal Muscle Cells

*Ariana Pichardo-Lowden*: Barriers to Glycemic Management in the Hospital Setting: Identifying Educational Aims

*Marina Ramirez-Alvarado*: Unique Features That Characterize Urinary Exosomes in Light Chain Amyloidosis (AL)

*Jessica Reid-Adam*: Induction of Regulatory T Cells by a Soluble Fraction of the Chinese Herb Qu Mai (*Dianthus superbus*)

*Juan Sanabria*: Glutathione Species Disturbances as an Early Marker of HCC in the Cirrhotic Woodchuck and the Human

*Moises Torres-Gonzalez*: Acute Effects of (-)-Epicatechin on Carbohydrate and Lipid Metabolism in a Fast-feed Mouse Model



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