

ENCOUNTER WITH CLINICAL AND TRASLATIONAL RESEARCHERS

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Abstract

PURPOSE: Forty-seven (47, 81.7%) respondents of a post survey at an introductory educational intervention in a variety of themes in clinical and translational research (CTR), sponsored by Title V Cooperative Project between the Medical Sciences Campus (MSC) of the University of Puerto Rico and the Universidad Central del Caribe, were unable to identify a CT researcher. Responding to this, we provided interdisciplinary sessions as part of the training cycle of Research Education Towards Opportunities (RETO) and Mentorship Offering Training Opportunities for Research (MOTOR), in which students and faculty identified, interviewed, and shared a presentation of their encounters with CT researchers. **METHODS:** Undergraduate students (UgS), undergraduate faculty (UgF), and graduate students (GS) of RETO-MOTOR were trained to prepare and share a presentation on a CT researcher, as well as to identify and interview a CT researcher during the Annual Research and Education Forum at MSC. In addition, an online survey was administered. **RESULTS:** Ten (10) out of seventeen (17) participants of RETO-MOTOR shared a presentation on a CT researcher. Five (5) of them were selected to be part of a panel during the VI Annual Symposium on CTR. Seventeen (17) answered and submitted an online survey. Of these, 96% agreed that through the training sessions they had the opportunity to meet, know, and interact with CT researchers from a variety of health professions. **CONCLUSION:** The interdisciplinary sessions related to the encounter with a CT researcher demonstrated to be an effective and innovative strategy to foster an interaction with a CT researcher. **GRANT SUPPORT:** Supported by the US Department of Education, Title V Grant Award # P031S160068.

Background

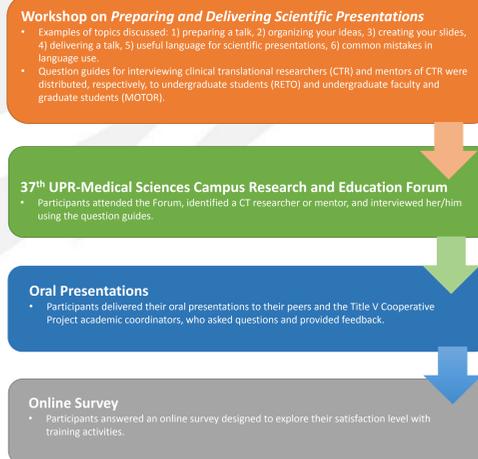
The University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences Campus (UPR-MSC) and the Universidad Central del Caribe (UCC) received a \$3.25 million grant for a five-year period to provide new opportunities in clinical and translational research (CTR) for health sciences undergraduate students (UgS) and faculty (UgF). The initiative followed the approval of a Title V Cooperative Proposal for the Developing Hispanic-Serving Institutions Program - Title V of the US Department of Education. CTR applies findings from basic sciences to enhance human health and well-being. It aims to “translate” findings in fundamental research into clinical practice and meaningful health outcomes.

The main focus of this project are UgS and UgF from the academic programs in the School of Health Professions and the School of Nursing at UPR-MSC and the Medical Imaging Technology Program at UCC. Our general goal is to provide tools and knowledge in CTR that will enhance their training in the health professions. In addition, the program promotes the interaction among other members of the UPR-MSC and UCC community by inviting graduate students (GS) from other programs to interact and become part of the research teams which will be organized within the project.

In February 2017, the Cooperative Title V Project between the UPR-MSC and UCC called UgS to participate in the First Training Cycle of Research Education Towards Opportunities (RETO), whereas UgF and GS were invited to join the Mentorship Offering Training Opportunities for Research (MOTOR) component. RETO-MOTOR participants from both institutions attended an introductory educational intervention in clinical and translational research (CTR). A post survey revealed that 47 (81.7%) of them were unable to identify a CT researcher. Addressing this need, we provided interdisciplinary sessions as part of the training cycle of RETO and MOTOR, in which students and faculty enrolled in this training program identified, interviewed, and shared a presentation of their encounters with CT researchers.

Methods

UgS in RETO, as well as UgF and GS in MOTOR, participated as a single interdisciplinary group in the following activities:

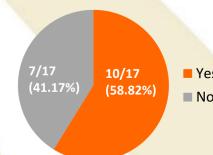


Results

1. Oral presentations of interviews with CT researchers

Ten (10) out of seventeen (17) participants of RETO-MOTOR shared a presentation of a CT researcher. The five (5) with the highest scores were selected to be part of a panel during the VI Annual Symposium in CTR.

Graph 1. Participants of RETO-MOTOR who shared a presentation on a CT researcher



2. Panel during the VI Annual Symposium on CTR at UPR-MSC

Five (5) RETO-MOTOR participants (2 UgS, 1 UgF, and 2 GS) shared the results of their interviews with CT researchers and mentors in a panel during the VI Annual Symposium on CTR.

Figure 1. Participants of RETO-MOTOR share their experiences with CT researchers in a panel



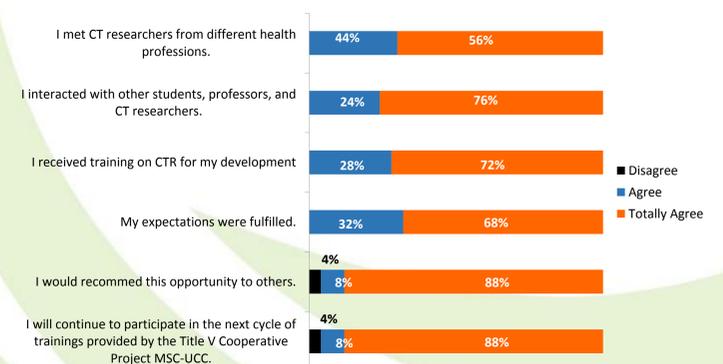
Results, cont.

3. Responses of RETO-MOTOR participants to the online survey

At the time of abstract submission, we had responses from seventeen (17) participants. This number increased to twenty-five (25) because a second cohort completed a slightly modified version of the training cycle and answered the survey. Therefore, we report results for the twenty-five (25) participants who responded.

96% agreed that through the training sessions they had the opportunity to meet, know, and interact with CT researchers from a variety of health professions.

Graph 2. Impact of the First Cycle of Training RETO-MOTOR (n=25)



Some qualitative comments

“I would like to continue learning about CTR, expanding my knowledge on this field, and in the near future be able to conduct a research project whose results benefit Puerto Rico’s health.”

“In meeting everyone, including the coordinators of the program, I realized the potential of engaging in clinical translational research with a multidisciplinary team.”

Conclusions

- Interdisciplinary training sessions demonstrated to be an effective strategy to facilitate the interaction of health sciences students and faculty with experienced CTR and learn about their contributions to human health.
- Promoting an early encounter and interaction with established CTR motivates health sciences students and faculty to learn more about this field of study.

Future Activities

- Advanced training cycles in CTR, including topics such as: research methods, bioethics, scientific writing and communication, mentor-mentee relationship, and community-based research.
- Establishment of a Center for Research Education and Science Communication Opportunities (CRESCO) at partner institutions’ libraries to provide UgS and UgF a variety of services, on-site and on-line, in order to promote their knowledge, skills, and capabilities in Clinical Translational Research/Education.