Meet Ms. Sanchez; Valued Research Participant and Diversity Advocate
By Andrew Torres, SMADRC MADURA trainee

Underrepresentation is a pervasive problem throughout our society. In spite of tremendous advancements in scientific research, information, education, and research opportunities are not equally available to all. According to Representation in Clinical Trials, “whites make up 67% of the U.S. population, but are 83% of research participants. Black Americans make up 13.4% of the U.S. population, but only 5% of trial participants. Hispanic/Latinos represent 18.1% of the U.S. population, but less than 1% of trial participants,” and the list goes on. With this in mind, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) introduced the Revitalization Act of 1993, which mandates the appropriate inclusion of minorities within all NIH-funded research. The act states: “Since a primary aim of research is to provide scientific evidence leading to a change in health policy or standard of care, it is imperative to determine whether the intervention or therapy being studied affects women or men or members of minority groups and their subpopulations differently.”

Research backs up this assertion. According to a recent op-ed in the Los Angeles Times, “Latinos represent only 1% of all genomic data available worldwide. That is less than any other major genetic ancestry group.

The Need for Diversity in Research: Initiatives Underway at the SMADRC
By Dana Seriano

A health disparity is when one group of people experiences higher rates of illness, disability, or death than other groups. Dementia care services can vary extensively depending on variations in race, ethnicity, geography, social and economic factors. Health disparities extend beyond clinical care to include a lack of minority group representation in Alzheimer’s research and clinical trials.

With the projected increases in Alzheimer’s disease among minority populations, it is critical to address these inequities. By 2060, the number of Alzheimer’s disease cases is predicted to rise to an estimated 14 million people, with minority populations being affected the most. Including diverse participants in aging and Alzheimer’s disease (AD) research is essential for effectively developing appropriate treatments for all individuals.

The Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center is dedicated to ensuring that the studies underway include a representative group of participants and that our proximity to the Mexico border is optimized to focus on enrolling Latino elders into studies about cognitive aging and ADRD. Studies focusing on cultural, linguistic, and genetic factors can all enhance our understanding regarding neurodegenerative diseases and impact outcomes for detection, diagnosis, and treatment of ADRD. Several major initiatives focused on Latino elders are underway at the SMADRC, and significant attention and resources are being invested to ensure representative enrollment in enrolling studies.

The Cognitive Aging Longitudinal Study aims to gather information to help with early detection, accurate diagnosis, especially at its earliest stages, and direc-
The Need for Diversity in Research with Ms. Sanchez continued

Compounding the problem is the fact that existing genetic Alzheimer’s disease picture for Latinos has been blurred and distorted by scientists reporting genetic findings for one Latino group, and then generalizing their results to all Latinos.” With this in mind, the Shirley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center (SMADRC) has taken action to remedy this problem. The center has bilingual and bicultural staff members, participates in community advisory boards, and collaborates with community partners and promotoras. Still, there’s a continuing challenge to achieve diverse recruitment goals to research Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD).

As a Latino student at UCSD participating in the Mentorship for Advancing Diversity in Undergraduate Research (MADURA) program, the lack of representation in ADRD research is of utmost concern to me: This could affect my parents, siblings, or those close to me someday. With this in mind, I want to contribute in any way I can to either halt disease progression in any of my loved ones, or stop that day from happening altogether. One step toward this goal is to figure out how researchers can draw more participation from the underrepresented communities. We wanted to see what we could learn from the community directly.

I was fortunate enough to speak with Ms. Sam Sanchez, who is a member of an underrepresented community and an actively engaged research participant in the SMADRC program. I asked if she would be willing to share how she became interested in participating in research, and where the gaps are in the connections between these communities and research.

“I have participated in research for many years because of my experience with my mama and my aunt. They were both diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, and I have been taking care of Mama for many years, whenever I can. Every year during the springtime, I would head back home to take care of Mama for a couple of months. As Mama’s disease progressed, I decided that it was time for her to be put in an assisted living facility, and it was the best decision I have ever made because of the level of care she was able to obtain,” Ms. Sanchez said.

“In dealing with this situation for so many years, I decided that I wanted to help in any way I could to find a solution to this disease. I started to research different Alzheimer’s disease studies that I could volunteer in and many people that I knew thought I was cuckoo for wanting to participate so much.”

We went on to talk about how this type of thinking is very common within underrepresented communities, because very often no relationship has been established, and therefore no trust is able to be built. With regards to why she decided to participate, Sanchez said, “We owe it to our children, and their children’s children, to find a solution. Without having people willing to participate, there will be no progress toward cures for any of these diseases. I knew that there was a lot of work to be done in order to find a solution to this disease, so I kept researching and asking around about where I could be of use. I was then referred to the ADRC and found out I could participate in the longitudinal study that would help progress toward a solution. So I am now a participant in the longitudinal study and I have done all the necessary procedures.”

I wanted to know if there was anything about the study requirements that might have kept her from participating in our study. “I know many people are scared of some of the procedures like the lumbar puncture and blood draw,” Ms. Sanchez said, “but if I can do these things, then anyone can do them. If you follow the directions that the neurologists give you, then there should be no problems.”

I asked Ms. Sanchez about ways research organizations could get through to more individuals within the community. She suggested that we “should talk to the churches within the community continued on page 3
The Need for Diversity in Research continued

Opportunities to participate in additional studies emerge frequently, with researchers at the ADRC studying bilingualism, caregiving, and the development of new diagnostic procedures designed to enhance effectiveness and reduce invasiveness of study procedures. Participants enrolled in the Cognitive Aging Longitudinal study are of particular interest for co-enrollment in a multitude of studies because the researchers can optimize data already collected and corroborate it with study-specific data to gain greater understanding about a specific topic of interest, while saving resources and minimizing participation time.

To address the underrepresentation of Latinos in Alzheimer’s Disease research efforts and encourage more diverse participation, we have employed a growing bilingual and bicultural team at the SMADRC, trained to administer all questionnaires and assessments in Spanish or English. In addition, we are able to offer free door to door transportation, and access to a research clinic located in Chula Vista to minimize travel time for individuals living in South Bay.

While making contributions that help researchers learn more about Alzheimer’s and related dementias that can benefit the Latino community, individual volunteers can also benefit from participating in Alzheimer’s disease studies. Alzheimer’s disease studies. Participants can help future generations through their contributions, as scientific advances lead to better treatments. Annual feedback about participants’ cognitive status is provided. Access to neuroscience experts and innovative tools for detection and diagnosis is also granted through research participation. Supportive and educational resources supplied by our renowned principal investigators, who specialize in neurodegenerative diseases and development of better diagnostic methods, can help those experiencing cognitive decline as well as their families detect and address Alzheimer’s Disease early on. Participation is research is always free, and compensation is provided; we value your time and commitment.

Our team acknowledges that braving the challenges brought on by Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias is an overwhelming process that can have a detrimental impact on the lives of those diagnosed, their family members, and their communities. Through a variety of Quality of Life (QOL) programs provided by our center and our collaborative partners, we hope to provide access to enlightening resources that encourage successful coping. These resources include opportunities to join support groups, assistance from social workers, educational workshops, and more. Taking part in our QOL programs with guidance from SMADRC trained facilitators is free to the community, and does not require research enrollment.

Sam Sanchez continued

to spread the information, because the more information that is known, the more comfortable people will feel to participate.”

To wrap up the interview, I asked Ms. Sanchez: “If there was one thing that you want people to take away from our conversation today, what would it be?” She wanted readers to know that “in order for the minorities within the community to progress toward a solution to these diseases, we must participate in these kinds of studies so that the researchers can have the information they need in order to cure them.” I join the SMADRC team and the research community in thanking Ms. Sanchez for her time and generosity and for sharing her story. We hope it will inspire others to consider participating, in hopes of helping future generations.

To demonstrate further commitment to the cause of educating the community about research opportunities available, Ms. Sanchez generously participated in the creation of a video about the actively enrolling VIVA MIND study. To watch the video to learn more, you can visit our SMADRC YouTube Channel at https://www.youtube.com/c/UCSDShileyMarcosADRC/videos.
SMADRC Expanding Services and Outreach to the South Bay

Community Collaborations: Shiley-Marcos ADRC teams up with The Neuron Clinic in Chula Vista

The Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center (SMADRC) is collaborating with practitioners in the Chula Vista Neuron Clinic to provide cognitive assessments to Spanish-speaking patients whose diagnostic workup would benefit from additional characterization. Figuring out which areas of thinking are impacted at the earliest stages of a cognitive complaint can be immensely helpful to clinicians working towards accurately diagnosing and treating patients. Depending on the underlying health condition, the individual experiencing difficulties with thinking may have areas of preserved ability, and other areas that are more impaired. Different diseases are more likely to impact different areas of the brain, and lead to different thinking abilities. For persons 65 and older, the most common cause of dementia is Alzheimer’s disease; however, there are various health conditions and neurodegenerative disorders that can lead to cognitive decline severe enough to impact everyday functional abilities.

The cognitive testing provided by the SMADRC gives the Neuron Clinic providers more detailed information about which areas of thinking are impacted in the referred patients, assisting clinicians in making a more accurate diagnosis when that information is considered with other diagnostic data, such as biomarkers from brain imaging and with a patient’s medication list and health history. Eligible patients from the Neuron Clinic will be offered the opportunity to enroll in SMADRC research studies underway at the South Bay Latino Research Center, complementing the care provided by their practitioners at the Neuron Clinic. Research participation is an opportunity to access diagnostic procedures, expert assessment, and additional resources at no cost while giving back to society and future generations by informing potential care for devastating diseases, such as Alzheimer’s and related dementias.

SMADRC Research Visits at the South Bay Latino Research Center

The UCSD SMADRC team has partnered with the Study of Latinos (SOL) study team to offer residents of South Bay the opportunity to participate in UCSD SMADRC research studies without leaving the neighborhood. In an attempt to minimize barriers to participation and alleviate the burden of commuting to La Jolla, the ADRC began offering research participants the option of completing their study visits in Chula Vista on Fridays. An SMADRC team of staff members, including a psychometrist, coordinator, and phlebotomist commute to the SBLRC clinic to collect in-person data every Friday. SMADRC neurologists engage with participants from La Jolla with the use of teleneurology visits that are facilitated by Spanish speaking staff members on site with the participants in the SBLRC clinic space. This offering coupled with the SMADRC team’s ability to offer free transportation to either Chula Vista
or La Jolla research clinic locations has enhanced our ability to enroll more Spanish speaking Latinos into our research program. We are working hard to identify and address barriers to research participation for diverse participants and make participation easier. We recognize that it is important to make these investments to ensure that our scientific understanding of memory, aging, and neurodegenerative diseases is inclusive and representative of the population.

**Providing Education and Outreach at the Norman Park Senior Center**

The SMADRC has partnered with the Norman Park Senior Center to bring educational programming and support groups in Spanish to the South Bay community. Community partners such as Alzheimer’s San Diego and the Alzheimer’s Association are working with the SMADRC team to develop and present educational programs about memory, aging, and Alzheimer’s to Spanish speaking audiences. In addition, SMADRC bilingual social worker, Ivonne Arias, MSW facilitates a monthly support group in Spanish in collaboration with the Alzheimer’s Association. To address the attendance barrier for caregivers responsible for loved ones with a diagnosis of dementia, supervised activities are now being offered for persons with dementia during the support group meeting. This will enable caregivers to attend the group while having peace of mind that their loved one is safely supervised in the room next to the meeting while they get the support and resources they need. This offering is available to anybody in the community at no cost. Research participation is not required.

**Partnering with Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**

The SMADRC has been honored to have the privilege of providing educational presentations and free memory screenings to the members of the ‘Our Lady of Guadalupe’ church. The Priest, Fr. Hily Gonzalez, has worked closely with SMADRC social worker, Ivonne Arias, MSW to support these important offerings to older adults in his community. The service enabled seniors to receive a brief screening to assess their thinking skills and memory in Spanish and receive feedback about their performance relative to their age and educational background. Regular monitoring of memory is an important aspect of brain health and should be assessed for the purposes of early identification of any changes that may indicate an underlying problem. Memory screenings are offered by the SMADRC staff at various venues in the community at no cost and with no requirement to participate in research.
Aging, Memory, and Social Connection
By Barton Palmer, Ph.D. and Allison Williams

There has been rising interest in the lay press and professional journals about the “epidemic of loneliness”. On one hand, the capacity to experience acute loneliness is likely a very adaptive characteristic, and there is some data consistent with the idea that this capacity has been favored by natural selection. Specifically, acute loneliness can serve as a social motivating signal that increases the individual’s drive to reach out and connect with others in ways that can be beneficial for survival and reproduction. However, very much analogous to the distinction between acute vs. chronic pain, while the capacity to feel acute loneliness can foster survival, chronic loneliness can become a problem for health and well-being.

A number of studies have found that people experiencing chronic loneliness and social isolation are at greater risk for a range of medical conditions, including increased risk of memory and other cognitive concerns, and possible dementia. The causes or mechanisms underlying such associations are not yet fully known, but some candidates being evaluated include direct biological ones such as the biological effects of sustained stress responses from chronic loneliness, and indirect ones such as the effects of social isolation on health behaviors and health-related resources.

Among the questions that remain about the association of loneliness and cognitive concerns is whether there might be adaptive patterns of acute loneliness that can be identified to help persons experiencing chronic loneliness. For example, are there helpful responses to acute loneliness that might be taught to persons prone to chronic loneliness? If so, a second question would be whether learning those adaptive responses can reduce subsequent risk of transitioning from mild cognitive concerns to dementia. Dr. Barton Palmer and his team are currently conducting an initial investigation regarding the first part of these questions. Specifically, they are interested in identifying adaptive and maladaptive patterns of loneliness with daily assessments over the course of several weeks among adults with mild cognitive impairment. They are also examining the association of levels and patterns of loneliness to current cognitive performance, and to some “biomarkers” that reflect inflammatory responses to chronic stress.

We are recruiting people between the ages of 51-90 years who are experiencing mild cognitive concerns without substantial impairment in daily functioning. Participation in this study takes place over the course of a month and involves two in-person visits, during which we will administer a clinical interview of mental health history, measures of memory, concentration, and other thinking skills, questionnaires regarding loneliness and social connection, as well as measures of feelings of depression, anxiety, and positive and negative feelings. There will also be a blood-draw (about 2 tablespoons) for blood-based measures related to our study questions. In addition, we will lend participants a smartphone on which they will complete twice-daily smartphone surveys for a month, and a Fitbit device, that will help us identify patterns of loneliness and physical activity to better understand how people respond to feelings of loneliness. Participants may be compensated up to $310.

You If you are interested in participating in or learning more about this study, please contact the study coordinator, Allison Williams, via phone at (858) 412-7560 or via email at apw010@ucsd.edu.
ENROLLING STUDIES

Observational Study: Cognitive Aging Longitudinal Study (also available in Spanish)

PI: Douglas Galasko, MD
CONTACT: Tracey Truscott, LCSW; (858) 822-4800 or ttruscott@ucsd.edu
TIME INVOLVED: Annual visit until the end of life
DESCRIPTION: The purpose of this study is to learn how the brain changes as we age. This is an observational study that collects behavioral, medical, and cognitive data and assesses neurological functioning. It does not involve an intervention. This is done annually from the time of enrollment to death.

Information about strategies for healthy brain aging is provided, as is feedback about one’s annual performance on cognitive testing. We continue to obtain blood and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) samples to compare changes detected in blood and CSF to changes in cognition and brain structure.

REQUIREMENTS: Age 65 and older if normal cognition, or diagnosis of MCI or early dementia due to Alzheimer’s, FTD, or DLB; study partner; lumbar puncture (LP) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) required; brain autopsy required.

Observational Study: Diverse Vascular Cognitive Impairment in Dementia

PI: James Brewer, MD, PhD
CONTACT: Lilly Pacheco, lpacheco@ucsd.edu and Jen Frascino jfrascino@ucsd.edu
TIME INVOLVED: Annual appointment for 3 yrs added to longitudinal visit; annual MRI scan for 3 yrs
DESCRIPTION: This study will examine the impact of individual and combined Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) measures of white matter injury on cognitive performance among a diverse, non-demented, stroke free population with cognitive complaints.

REQUIREMENTS: enrolled in the cognitive aging longitudinal study, ages 65-90; self-reported decline in memory or thinking over the last 1-3 years, African American, Hispanic/Latino, or European ancestry, able to have an MRI.

Join Our Research Registry!

The SMADRC collaborates with a multitude of researchers at UC San Diego, San Diego State, the VA Medical Center, the Salk Institute, as well as partners in industry and National Consortia. A listing of currently enrolling studies can be found on our website. Whether you are looking for studies that provide an intervention or those that simply gather observational data and provide feedback, there are a wide array of opportunities available for older adults with and without memory concerns or a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia. A few of the observational studies currently underway include projects focused on:

• Subjective cognitive decline
• The impact of vascular changes on cognition
• Olfaction and visual dysfunction
• The blood brain barrier
• The effects of COVID-19 on brain aging
• Generating human models of ADRD using induced pluripotent stem cells
• Gamma neurofeedback intervention

If you are interested in learning more about your own cognitive status, and making important contributions to advancing science in the areas of brain health and Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias to help future generations, sign up for our Research Registry. Your unique profile and preferences will be considered alongside enrolling studies and you will be contacted by affiliated ADRC researchers if you are a potential match for their protocol. You can sign up by scanning this QR code with your iphone camera and clicking on the link to answer the registry questionnaire or calling 858-822-4800 to speak with a staff member.
Intervention Trials for MCI and Early Alzheimer’s Disease, and Other Dementias

A clinical trial is a research study in which a human subject is assigned to one or more interventions (which may include an investigational drug, placebo, or other control) to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related or behavioral outcomes. When you volunteer to take part in clinical research, you help doctors and researchers learn more about the disease and improve health care for people in the future.

The ADRC Clinical Trials Unit has a variety of clinical trials available for participants with Alzheimer’s disease (AD) and other dementias. We add new studies to our portfolio regularly, and encourage individuals who are interested in participating to reach out to the ADRC. Studies currently recruiting or in the pipeline that will be starting recruitment soon include:

**AVANIR AVP-786**

This is a phase 3, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to assess the efficacy of AVP-786 for the treatment of agitation in patients with AD. A safe and effective treatment for agitation in AD is an unmet need. Study participant will take the drug orally every 12 hours.

**MAIN REQUIREMENTS:** Age 50–90; probable AD; agitation that interferes with daily routine

**ALECTOR AL001-3**

Phase 3 study for individuals at risk for or diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia due to mutations in the progranulin gene. This study will provide genetic testing for individuals with a family history who may be eligible to participate. The length of treatment is 96 weeks.

**MAIN REQUIREMENTS:** Age 25–85; known carriers of heterozygous loss-of-function progranulin gene (GRN) mutations

Please contact Nobuko Kemmotsu, Ph.D., at clinicaltrialsADRC@health.ucsd.edu or (858) 246-1267 to learn more about clinical trials.

**VIVA MIND PQ912**

The goal of this phase 2 study is to advance a first-in-class, new small molecule treatment for early AD. Varoglutamstat (PQ912) is an oral, twice-daily medication that addresses N-terminal post-translationally modified amyloid beta (pGlu-Aβ), a particularly toxic subspecies of Aβ. This study will evaluate whether varoglutamstat’s mechanism of action can result in a measurable therapeutic effect on cognition, function, and relevant pharmacodynamic and biological markers in early AD.

**MAIN REQUIREMENTS:** Age 50–89; MCI or mild AD; lumbar puncture required
The Importance of Cerebrospinal Fluid for ADRD Biomarkers Research

A critical goal of our research at the UCSD Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center (ADRC) is to find biological markers that will detect Alzheimer’s disease (AD) in its earliest stages, which will increase diagnostic accuracy and allow potential new treatments to be started as early and as precisely as possible. Our biomarker research focuses on measurement of specific AD-related proteins found in the fluid that bathes the brain and spinal cord (cerebrospinal fluid, or CSF) since these protein levels change as Alzheimer’s disease develops, even before symptoms are apparent.

We are asking people to participate in this important research by providing a small sample of CSF for biochemical analysis. CSF donation is a safe and common procedure that can be completed in less than one hour. (The actual procedure requires only a few minutes.) The procedure is virtually painless, and more than 50 are completed each year at the ADRC without complication.

Many participants in the ADRC’s research have contributed CSF, for which we are very grateful. It is critical, however, that we periodically re-measure the proteins in CSF to track how they change over time and determine how this change relates to changes in memory and brain structure. CSF donation greatly increases the value of all data from clinical scales, cognitive testing, and medical procedures that ADRC research volunteers have already completed.

Our research coordinator will discuss this important effort during research participants’ next annual appointment; please consider this request. As a token of our gratitude, we will provide $100 for CSF donation.

We greatly appreciate all of the time and effort that ADRC research volunteers have already put in, and we ask for this additional contribution because we think it is critical to the fight against Alzheimer’s disease. If you would like additional information about CSF donation, including a fact sheet, education video, or video demonstration, please email Christina Gigliotti, Ph.D., at participate@ucsd.edu or call (858) 822-4800.
Musical Biographies: A Personal Playlist and Memory Book QOL Program

“Is that a picture of you and John at your wedding, Mary? What did you dance to that day for the first time as husband and wife?” Mary doesn’t remember the day nor the song, but her husband John does. “We danced to ‘The Blue Danube’ waltz,” says John. Villa Musica’s resident music therapist, Haley, finds a version of the waltz on Spotify that would have been available in 1961, the year John and Mary were married. Haley watches for physical reactions from Mary, who was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s last spring and is in rapid decline. Mary’s eyes light up and she starts to gently sway to the music. John joins hands with her and they smile at each other. Villa Musica’s expressive arts therapist, Joy, puts a square of satin fabric in the hand of Mary, who rubs it between her fingers. “Looks like your wedding dress was satin, Mary,” says Joy. Mary can’t speak about the dress, but her body, her fingers, and her smile say that somewhere, she does remember. “We’ll add this one to her playlist, OK, John?” Haley is excited to see Mary’s response, and the playlist of Mary’s memories begins to unfold.

Villa Musica’s Musical Biographies™ program welcomes participants with memory issues and their care partners to join in a unique multisensorial opportunity to create a playlist of favorite songs and a scrapbook that brings those musical memories to life. In partnership with the Shiley-Marcos ADRC at UCSD, participants meet in six weekly sessions to make music, create art, share stories and meet other people who are on a similar journey.

“Our program brings such joy,” says Dr. Fiona Chatwin, Villa Musica’s executive director and founder of the Musical Biographies™ program. “After the initial shyness...I am always thrilled to see people playing music, making art, laughing and dancing as we get to being creative together.” For many caregivers, life can become difficult as they struggle to navigate the cognitive decline of a loved one; it’s quite common to feel there is never anything “fun” on the schedule. Musical Biographies™ provides an opportunity to break this cycle. “At any given moment during the program, I will see friends dancing, couples laughing, caregivers sharing a simple moment of empathy, and the art is just fabulous,” says Dr. Chatwin amid a busy Thursday morning at Villa Musica. “The fact that our program leaders are trained music and art therapists prevents the art- and music-making from being so outcome-oriented,” a different environment than one might find in typical art or music classes. “At a Musical Biographies™ session, it’s all about process,” Dr. Chatwin notes.

The Musical Biographies™ program takes place at Villa Musica, San Diego’s Community Music Center, 10373 Roselle Street, Suite 170, San Diego, CA 92121 and also at The Glenner Centers locations. To watch videos about the Musical Biographies program, visit our website QOL page. The Fall session will be held October 5, 12, 19, 26 & November 2, 9. Free registration is available through our Eventbrite Page or you can contact Tracey Truscott ttuscott@ucsd.edu.

Staff Updates

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

ERIN SHUSTERICH graduated from UCSD in 2019 with a B.S. in Physiology & Neuroscience and a History minor. She worked at the SMADRC for four years where she decided to pursue biomedical research and public health careers. Erin is currently working as a certified Neuro Technician performing Magnetic e-Resonance Therapies. She is applying to genetic counseling Master programs with ambitions to further bridge traditional sciences and psychological care.

ALEX FIGUEROA received his B.S. from UCSD in Physiology & Neuroscience in 2018. He worked at the SMADRC as a bilingual psychometrist and outreach specialist in the Latino community. He is currently finishing his final year of medical school at UT Southwestern and hopes to begin a residency in Emergency Medicine. “The ADRC built me up to face the challenges of medical school and beyond, and ignited my passion for research and outreach.”

INTRODUCING

JENNIFER (JEN) FRASCINO, MA was born in Connecticut and graduated from UC San Diego with a Bachelor’s in Psychology in 1993. Following, she earned a Masters in Counseling Psychology before finding her way into research in the Department of Psychiatry at UCSD. Just prior to coming to the ADRC, she worked for 25 years as the Research Coordinator in a laboratory examining the organization and structure of memory by way of studying well-characterized patients with amnesia. Jen currently works as a study coordinator at the ADRC on a project involving vascular contributions to cognitive impairment. She is also the coordinator for the UCSD site of the Alzheimer’s Disease Neuroimaging Initiative (ADNI). Neuropsychology.
**KIMBERLY LOPEZ** graduated with a Human Development degree in 2017 from UCSD. She wore many hats as an under-graduate turned paid staff member at the SMADRC including, Latino outreach and lab management, which advanced her research skills and shaped her career goal to pursue medicine. While gaining hands-on experience alongside ADRC physicians and earning her phlebotomy license, she applied to a pre-health post baccalaureate program at CSUSM and graduated in 2021. Her professional goal is to become a physician, and she is currently applying to medical school.

**CYNTHIA AVALOS** graduated from UCSD in 2018 with a B.S. in Biochemistry & Cell Biology and a minor in psychology. She worked at the SMADRC for 3 years as a bilingual psychometrist and research coordinator. She is currently a medical student at Albany Medical College and will specialize in Internal Medicine-Pediatrics. She plans to work in Latino communities in the future and address the needs of medically underserved communities. Her experience at SMADRC has provided her essential communication and interpersonal skills to actively engage and listen to patients.

**AMANDA CALCETAS** graduated in 2020 with a B.S. in Cognitive Behavioral Neuroscience and Clinical Psychology. She volunteered at the SMADRC working with Memory Screening Day (MSD) databases. Currently, she works as a Research Project Manager at the Neuropsychology of Vascular Dementia and Alzheimer’s (NOVAA) Lab at UCSD. She has co-authored manuscripts investigating the role of vascular risk factors in the early detection of Alzheimer’s. The ADRC cultivated Amanda’s research interests, and she has recently been accepted to a PhD program at Fordham University in NYC.

**STEPHANIE RODRIGUEZ-WANG** received her B.S. from UCSD in Physiology & Neuroscience in 2016. She worked at the SMADRC for 3 years as a bilingual psychometrist and research coordinator, where she co-authored a publication focused on chronic care-giver stress. She later worked as an MA at an outpatient neurology clinic and is currently finishing her Masters in Physician Assistant studies from The George Washington University in DC. Her patient interactions in research and clinic helped solidify her decision to be a part of the healthcare community as a future bilingual provider.

**CHRIS SLOWIK** graduated from UCSD in 2018 with a B.S. in Biochemistry & Cell Biology. He worked at the SMADRC as a volunteer and during his gap year as a study coordinator and lab manager. “My time at the ADRC gave me a profound understanding of clinical research and equipped me with invaluable multidisciplinary and interpersonal skills that I have continued to utilize throughout my clinical education.” Chris is currently a third year medical student at Drexel, completing his clinical rotations in the Bay Area, and considering applying to residency in Diagnostic Radiology next year.

**DIEP NGUYEN** graduated in 2021 with a B.S. in Public Health, with a medicine sciences concentration. She was a MADURA trainee at the SMADRC, where she shadowed research visits, helped manage data, and engaged with QoL programs. She assisted with Vietnamese translations for the Asian Cohort for Alzheimer’s Disease (ACAD). Diep is finishing the PostBacc program at UC Davis and obtained her EMT license and Phlebotomist license. Diep will apply to medical school next year and would like to work in Emergency Medicine.

**EILEEN RUIZ** graduated from UCSD in 2019 with a B.S. in Human Biology. She volunteered at the SMADRC during her gap years alongside the Spanish-speaking psychometry team. This opportunity allowed her to learn about disparities that exist in clinical research for Hispanic and Latino communities. Eileen is currently a first year medical student at the UC San Diego School of Medicine. Her professional goal is to work with underserved communities as a physician.

**ALONZO MENDOZA** graduated from UCSD in 2022 with a B.S. in Public Health. He was a SMADRC MADURA trainee for two years. His hands-on learning experiences included clinical research and the SOL-INCA lab writing a paper focused on the association between hearing impairment and cognition. Alonzo works at UCSD as a research coordinator in the Neurology dept and will be applying to MPH programs, to work as a government epidemiologist. His time with SMADRC helped him gain confidence and confirmed his interest in working in the sciences.
The Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center provides an array of in-person and virtual support groups and activities designed to support well-being and quality of life for persons with memory disorders and their care partners.

- **Facilitated by trained professionals** • **No obligation to participate in research** • **No cost to participate** • Virtual meetings are easy to access via Zoom or phone • Pre-Registration is required: (858) 822-4800 or adrc.ucsd.edu

- **Caregiver Support**
  - Monthly support group open to caregivers of all ages providing care to individuals with Alzheimer’s or a related disorder.
  - Weekly support group at the Shiley-Marcos ADRC for people with early-stage Alzheimer’s or a related disorder.
  - Monthly support group for caregivers providing care for individuals with non-Alzheimer’s dementias, such as Lewy Body Dementia or Fronto-temporal Dementia.

- **Monthly program in collaboration with the San Diego Museum of Art, Mingei International Museum, Timken Museum of Art, and Museum of Photographic Arts**. SMADRC trained docents provide 1-hour interactive tours to participants with memory disorders and their care partners.

- **Six-session Musical Biographies™ program developed by Villa Musica for participants with memory disorders and their care partners.**

- **Este grupo es ofrecido el segundo jueves del mes para familiares o amigos con un ser querido diagnosticado con Alzheimer u otra demencia. Las sesiones son gratuitas y ofrecidas en persona en el área de Chula Vista.**

- **Virtual meetings available** • **In-person meetings available**