
The Puerto Rico Physiological Society (PRPS) celebrated its 2nd Annual Scientific Meeting as part of the First Caribbean Obesity Summit held on March 2, 2012 at the Ponce Hilton Resort and Casino. This dual meeting brought together a diverse group of medical and public health professionals, practitioners, academicians, researchers, and students (post-doctoral, graduate and undergraduate) from across the Island and the U.S. to explore the science and impact of obesity on the population as well as highlight recent advances in physiology. Attendance at the meeting totaled more than 200 registered individuals, and twelve research posters were presented by students from the three major medical schools on the island.

The meeting began at about 8.30 am with a continental breakfast and welcoming remarks from Dr Leon Ferder, President of the PRPS and Chairman of the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology at Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences, and Dr. Anne Peterson, Director of the Public Health Program. Obesity is a multi-faceted phenomenon of genetic, molecular, environmental, and behavioral factors that invariably determines metabolism, appetite and body weight. As in the U.S. and other parts of the developed world, obesity rates have reached epidemic proportions in Puerto Rico. According to the Kaiser Foundation, Puerto Rico has surpassed the U.S. in obesity prevalence and type 2 diabetes. The First Caribbean Obesity Summit provided an educational and scientific forum for participants to discuss and define responses to help reduce the obesity
trend and associated diseases and to improve overall health, productivity and quality of life of people of Caribbean, Puerto Rican and Hispanic origin.

The program included a cadre of speakers from prominent universities and health centers in Puerto Rico and the U.S. as well as local and federal agencies covering topics from diabetes and kidney disease to school lunch and farmer’s market nutritional programs.

The morning sessions moderated by Dr. Caroline Appleyard (PRPS) commenced with two presentations from the University of Puerto Rico School of Public Health related to obesity and the metabolic syndrome (Cynthia Pérez, Ph.D. and Christine Palacios, Ph.D.), followed by the public health keynote speaker, Nadine Gracia, MD, MSCE, Acting Director of the Office of Minority Health of the US Department of Health and Human Services and Former Advisor on Childhood Obesity in the Office of the First Lady. Dr. Gracia updated the audience on the recent federal initiatives aimed at obesity and health disparities in the Hispanic population.

During the later part of the morning Dr. Kevin Hall (Senior Investigator, NIDDK) and Dr. Susan Fried (Boston University School of Medicine) gave scientific sessions related to energy imbalance and the metabolic consequences of obesity.

The research keynote address Pathophysiology of Hypertension in Obesity and Metabolic Syndrome was presented by John E. Hall, Ph.D., Professor and Chair of Physiology and Biophysics; Director of the Center of Excellence in Cardiovascular-Renal Research at the University of Mississippi Medical Center; Editor-in-chief of the
During a lunchtime session, the posters and the student presenters were evaluated by six judges on the overall quality of the presentations. The best three poster presentations received a cash award. The selections were as follows:

**First Place**, Namyr Antonio Martinez from University of Puerto Rico Medical Sciences. The title of Mr. Antonio’s presentation was “Membrane Rafts Involvement in the Anti-apoptotic Action of P2Y2 Receptors During Mechanical Injury of 1321N1 Astrocytoma Cells” (Advisors: Drs. JD Miranda & WI Silva).

**Second Place**, Abigail Ruiz from Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences. The title of Ms. Ruiz’ presentation was “CXCL12a induces proliferation and migration of human endometrial epithelial cells expressing CXCR4” (Advisor: I Flores).

**Third Place**, Ángel de la Cruz from Universidad Central del Caribe. The title of Mr. de la Cruz’ presentation was: “Glial involvement in the development of Parkinson’s disease” (Advisor: M Inyushin).
In the afternoon, the meeting adjourned into two separate rooms to hold concurrent sessions related to diabetes (including a presentation by Elba Blanes, Executive Director of the Puerto Rican Diabetes Association, and talks by Kaumudi Joshipura, ScD and Leon Ferder M.D./Ph.D.); and public health, with panels moderated by Dr. Peterson on “Puerto Rican Risk factors for Obesity & its Complications” and “Puerto Rican Obesity Related Programs”.

The PRPS portion of the meeting concluded with a business meeting in which the new officers for 2012-2013 were selected as follows: President: Dr. Jorge Miranda (UPR-School of Medicine); President-Elect: Dr. Caroline B. Appleyard (Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences); Past President: Dr. Leon Ferder (PSMHS); Secretary/Treasurer: Dr. Priscila Sanabria (Universidad Central del Caribe); Councilor: Dr. Eugenio Longo (Bio-PR Associates); Councilor: Jose O. Garcia (Post-doctoral student, UPR School of Medicine); Councilor: Dr. Amelia Rivera (Universidad Central del Caribe); Past President: Dr. Nelson Escobales (UPR School of Medicine). The PRPS acknowledged this year’s sponsors for their support which included the American Physiological Society, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences (PSMHS), Universidad Central del Caribe, UPR-Medical Sciences Campus (UPR-MSC), the RISE training programs at PSMHS and UPR-MSC, the City of Ponce, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease and the Puerto Rico Departments of Health, Education, Agriculture and Sports and Recreation.

The meeting concluded at 5:45 pm, after closing remarks from Dr. Joxel Garcia, PSMHS President and Dean, and presentation of the poster prizes at an awards ceremony.

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