



# The Empowerer

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER PROJECT EMPOWERMENT

Issue 3C  
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- Dr. Juan Carlos Arango: Getting to Know the New Principal Investigator
- Research to Action Note: *Race/ethnicity differences in satisfaction with life among persons with traumatic brain injury.*
- Website Update: Project Empowerment Modules

## COMING SOON:

- State of the Science Conference:  
March 1st – 2nd, 2012 in Arlington, Virginia.  
**See page 6 for further details.**

**Editors:** Juan Carlos Arango, Ph.D.  
Jessica Miller, B.S., Project Coordinator

Welcome to the eighth issue of THE EMPOWERER, the quarterly newsletter for Project Empowerment. In this issue, we focus on our upcoming State of the Science Conference in March, and outline some of the main planned events. In addition, we highlight a new member of the Project Empowerment team, as well as other accomplishments.

As a follow-up to our last issue, I would like to announce that two of our major projects are now online and ready for use: The Rehabilitation and Disability Research online course, and the Grant Writing and Project Management online course. These courses are designed for persons of all backgrounds, and those of racial/ethnic minority are especially encouraged to view them. The intent is to give those who complete the module a comprehensive introduction to the world of research. Please visit [www.vcu-projectempowerment.org](http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org) to explore these courses, as well as other information on the website. We invite you to participate and provide feedback.

Finally, until now I have unfortunately not taken the time to introduce myself in THE EMPOWERER. Hopefully throughout this issue you will get a sense of who I am, what my primary areas of research are, and what motivates me to pursue them. Briefly, my research interests are in neuropsychology, brain injury outcomes, rehabilitation, and health care disparities. Specifically, I investigate traumatic brain injury (TBI), spinal cord injury (SCI), and caregivers' wellbeing in the Latino population. However, my research interests are always growing and incorporating new issues within this community. Thus, you can see how my work directly lines up with the mission and objectives of Project Empowerment.

I hope that you enjoy this issue of THE EMPOWERER.

Sincerely,

Juan Carlos Arango, Ph.D., Principal Investigator  
Associate Professor  
Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
Rehabilitation Psychology and Neuropsychology  
School of Medicine

## Spotlight on Minority Disability Scholarship

### Television Interview:

- Getachew, A.M. (September 2, 2011). Disability in Ethiopia. *The Helen Mesfin Show* [Television Series Episode]. Washington, DC: Ethiopian Broadcasting Station.

### Journal Articles:

- Gary, K.W., Nicholls, E., Shamburger, A., Stevens, L.F., & Arango-Lasprilla, J.C. (in press). Do racial and ethnic minority patients fare worse after SCI: A critical review of the literature. *NeuroRehabilitation*.

### Panel Discussions:

- Gary, K.W. (October 6, 2011). Invited Lecture on Graduate Involvement in Research. University of Maryland – Eastern Shore. Princess Ann, MD.
- Getachew, A.M. (October 6, 2011). Invited Lecture on Undergraduate Involvement in Research. University of Maryland – Eastern Shore. Princess Ann, MD.
- Stevens, L.F. (July 13, 2011). Health system and life experience: Implications for health disparities in the disability community. State of the Science in Disability Research Conference sponsored by the Interagency Committee on Disability Research. Washington, DC.

### Graduation and Placement:

- Kelli Williams Gary moved from being a post-doctoral researcher on the Project Empowerment grant to being Research Coordinator.
- Kelli Williams Gary moved into the position of Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at VCU.
- Mimi Getachew was awarded to a Ph.D. in Rehabilitation Counselor Education from the University of Iowa.
- Mimi Getachew moved from being a pre-doctoral student on Project Empowerment to begin a post-doctoral fellow in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department under Dr. Juan Arango at VCU.

## Update on Research Studies and Project Empowerment Website

Study 1 -- A national survey examining the experiences of Americans with disabilities from racial and ethnic minority groups. The purposes are to illuminate the current capacity of the public rehabilitation and disability system, and to learn what research methods and dissemination practices are needed to advance the field in culturally competent research.

- The National Survey (Study 1) hit a minor setback waiting for IRB approval over the summer. It has now been granted approval, and those in charge of the survey are moving quickly to collect the necessary preliminary data. The survey will go out to participants in mid-October.

**Study 2** -- A longitudinal investigation examining post-injury unemployment for racial and ethnic minority persons with traumatic brain and spinal cord injuries (TBI/SCI).

- The first phase of Study 2 addresses post-injury unemployment for racial and ethnic minority individuals with SCI.
  - This portion of the study has been completed and a journal article has been published.
    - Arango-Lasprilla, J.C., Ketchum, J.M., Francis, K., Lewis, A., Permuda, P., Wehman, P., & Kreutzer, J. (2010). Race, ethnicity, and employment outcomes 1, 5, and 10 years after spinal cord injury: A longitudinal study. *PM&R*, 2, 901-910.
- The second phase of Study 2 specifically addresses TBI.
  - This portion of the study has been completed and a journal article has been submitted for publication.
    - Arango-Lasprilla, J.C., Ketchum, J.M., Lewis, A.M., Krch, D., Gary, K.W., & Dodd Jr., B.A. (In press). Racial and ethnic disparities in employment outcomes for persons with traumatic brain injury: A longitudinal investigation 1-5 years after injury. *PM&R*.

**Study 3** -- A longitudinal investigation examining prevalence and trends in employment discrimination due to disability for diverse racial and/or ethnic minority groups.

- This has been completed and a journal article entitled *Employment Discrimination of Ethnic Minorities with Disabilities* was submitted for publication in 2011 by Dr. Juan Arango, Dr. Jessica Ketchum, Dr. Mimi Getachew, Dr. Kelli Gary, and Dr. Jessica Hurley.

### **Update on the Project Empowerment Website**

- Several changes have been made to the website! Now there are educational modules designed to help people of all disciplines and backgrounds. Modules include:
  - Minority disability research training
  - Grant writing and publishing skills training
  - Webcasts (varying subjects within the field of racial/ethnic minorities and disabilities)

- If you are not currently doing so, using these modules in the classroom could significantly help students interested in the area of rehabilitation research, or be used to give those with more general interests an introduction to research.
- Modules are self-paced and can be done in any order, thus, they are also appropriate to do independently outside of a classroom or work environment.
- Currently, VCU-CERSE affiliates make use of these modules, but there has also been interest from other VCU departments in using them to help with grant writing and research training.
- Expect two new webcasts in November by Dr. Paul Perrin and Dr. Eugene Monasterio. Dr. Perrin's webcast will address racial/ethnic disparities in stroke rehabilitation and caregiver interventions in Latinos. Dr. Monasterio's webcast will address the treatment of children of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds with disabilities.
- Please visit <http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org/> for more information and to explore our educational tools.

## Capacity Building Forum

The capacity building component of Project Empowerment is very important. It represents a way to engage in succession planning by identifying individuals who can be developed to be ready, passionate, and interested in devoting careers to the study of racial and ethnic minorities with disabilities. A range of strategies and activities is deployed to build capacity.

- We are currently in the process of trying to bring the University of Maryland, Eastern Shore (UMES) on board with Project Empowerment. We will keep you updated on this potential collaboration.
- Dr. Kelli Williams Gary and Dr. Mimi Getachew recently gave two presentations at UMES. They covered topics related to minority disability research; one targeted graduate students and the other targeted undergraduate students.



### **Introducing: Dr. Eugenio Monasterio, M.D.**

Dr. Monasterio is a medical doctor in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department at VCU/MCV. He works in the affiliated Children's Hospital and also conducts research in the areas of: pediatric physical medicine and rehabilitation, pediatric cerebral palsy, spina bonfida, and muscular dystrophy.

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Monasterio to our Project Empowerment team. We are excited for the contributions he will make to the project.



### **Profile: Dr. Juan Carlos Arango**

Dr. Juan Arango is an Associate Professor in the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Dr. Arango is originally from Colombia, South America, where he received his BS in Psychology with a clinical concentration from the University of Antioquia. He then received his MD and Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in Neuropsychology from Autonomous University of Madrid in Spain. Next, he completed a Post-Doctoral fellowship in Brain Injury and Rehabilitation at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. Finally, Dr. Arango came to VCU and has been an avid researcher in the field of

minority disabilities. He has published more than 120 articles and book chapters in the area of brain injury, minority issues, and rehabilitation.

Dr. Arango is both nationally and internationally recognized for his work, and has won numerous awards and distinctions in his field. Last year, he received the Early Career/Emerging Professional Award from the American Psychological Association's Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) and Division 45 (Society for the Psychological Study of Ethnic Minority Issues). This year, he won the Early Career Award from the National Academy of Neuropsychology.

These prestigious awards showcase Dr. Arango's dedication and achievements within the few short years he has been studying minority disability research. His passion for this area of research is evident in the fact that since 2002, when he began publishing in this field, the number of publications on the topic of minority disabilities and brain injury has soared. Dr. Arango has obviously set a standard, as more professionals come into this field of research each year. Thus, as PI to Project Empowerment, Dr. Arango brings fresh perspective to the grant in addition to years of experience. He is excited to be part of this ongoing research endeavor, and to bring this line of research back to those it most closely affects.

Dr. Arango will be the chair of the upcoming State of the Science Conference in March, as well as presenting several talks at the conference. There is also a webcast entitled *Traumatic Brain Injury in Spanish-Speaking Individuals* on the Project Empowerment website (<http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org>) for a glimpse into his work.

It is the pleasure of the Project Empowerment team to have Dr. Arango as PI on the project. ■

### **Training, Dissemination, and Knowledge Translation Corner**

Project Empowerment deploys 15 strategies for training and dissemination. Each is designed to promote minority disability knowledge system-wide. Together, they constitute a multi-pronged approach to ensure broad reach and maximum system penetration of knowledge generated by Project Empowerment. The strategies are:

- Newsletter
- Listserv
- Website ([www.vcu-projectempowerment.org](http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org))
- Minority disability research training module (online)
- Grant writing training module (online)
- Webcasts on minority disability topics
- Fact sheets on minority disability topics (in production)
- Conference presentations
- Invited Lecturers
- Published manuscripts

- State of the Science Conference
- Handbook of minority disability research best practices,
- Facebook page
- Research days
- Research to Action Notes

Research to Action Notes (RANs) are simple and concise summaries of the bottom-line “lessons learned” from Project Empowerment research and other related minority disability research that will apply to rehabilitation practice.

This issue’s RAN is based on the following journal article:

- Arango-Lasprilla, J.C., Ketchum, J.M., Gary, K., Hart, T., Corrigan, J., Forster, L., & Mascialino, G. (2009). Race/ethnicity differences in satisfaction with life among persons with traumatic brain injury. *NeuroRehabilitation, 24*, 5-14.
- Past studies have shown that persons with traumatic brain injury (TBI) suffer a reduction in the quality of their lives. Not only does TBI affect a person physically and mentally, but can result in lower: quality of life, well-being, quality of relationships, employment levels, and productivity.
- Such areas of a person’s life are known to lead to higher levels of overall life satisfaction, thus persons with TBI are at risk for lower levels of satisfaction with life (SWL).
- Few past studies have focused on specific populations who suffer from TBI. Such populations can include those who are younger versus older, married versus not married, male versus female, employed versus unemployed, and of different racial/ethnic minority statuses versus not.
- This latter population is of specific importance, seeing as research on racial/ethnic minorities with TBI has been conflicting. For example, some studies have found that minorities with TBI are more likely to have lower SWL than Caucasians. Other studies have found no relationship between minority status and TBI.
- The current study set out to disentangle these conflicting results. It included higher sample sizes and specifically divided individuals by their race/ethnicity to better pinpoint the true relationship between minorities with TBI and SWL.
- In total, the study included 3,368 participants. Of those, 2,478 were Caucasian, 629 were African American, 180 were Hispanic, and 81 were Asian/Pacific Islander.

- The Instruments used were: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), demographic questionnaire, Glasgow Coma Scale (GCS), Functional Independence Measure (FIM), Disability Rating Scale (DRS), and questions regarding other injury characteristics.
- The current study controlled for factors such as marital status, employment, and cause of injury. This was so the SWLS reflected ethnic/racial differences only.
- It was found that at one year post-injury, African Americans had lower SWL than Caucasians and Asian/Pacific Islanders, as reported by SWLS scores. There was no significant difference between any other race/ethnic groups' SWLS scores.
- Other findings that are consistent with past studies include: higher SWL for employed persons with TBI, higher SWL for married persons with TBI, and lower SWL for persons with a violent cause of TBI.

## News and Accomplishments

The State of the Science Conference has officially been scheduled for March 1st – 2nd, 2012. The conference has three main goals, which are:

- [1] To advance the state of the science of disability research involving racial and ethnic minorities by identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing current evidence-based strategies being utilized.
  - [2] To build capacity of researchers dedicated to engaging in minority disability methodologies, and recruitment methods relevant to underserved populations.
  - [3] To foster networking and communication between researchers, students, clinicians, funding organizations, journal editors, and consumers interesting in improving disability research and services for racial and ethnic minorities.
- The conference is intended for multidisciplinary rehabilitation professionals, including physicians, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, rehabilitation nurses, psychologists, rehabilitation case managers, rehabilitation counselors, disability specialists, other professionals serving the field of rehabilitation medicine, and researchers studying minorities with disabilities.
  - The conference days will be filled with “Breakout Sessions,” which include presentations on the topics of “Health beliefs and cultural considerations in working with people with disabilities,” “Creating the right balance between research, teaching, and practice,” and “Quantitative and qualitative research and statistical methods for disparities research,” among others.
  - For more information, please visit <http://www.vcu-projectempowerment.org> and click on the Register Online link in the left box.

**Project  
Empowerment  
Team:  
Key  
Stakeholders**

**National Institute of Disability Rehabilitation Research  
Project Officer -- Pimjai Sudsawad, Sc.D., OTR**

- Partnerships.....**
- Kent State University
  - Norfolk State University
  - Penn State University
  - The American Association of People with Disabilities
  - University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign
  - Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services
  - Virginia State University
  - Virginia Union University
- Lead Project Personnel.....**
- Juan Carlos Arango, Ph.D., Principal Investigator
  - Eugenio Monasterio, M.D., Co-Principal Investigator
  - Paul Wehman, Ph.D., Co-Principal Investigator
  - Jessica Ketchum, Ph.D., Biostatistician
- Project Staff .....**
- Mike Barcus, M.S., Project Manager
  - Teri Blankenship, M.S., Dissemination Coordinator
  - Keith Caleb, B.A., Fiscal Staff
  - Douglas Erickson, M.S., Coordinator of Information Technology
  - Jessica Miller, B.S., Project Coordinator
  - Kelli Williams Gary, Ph.D., OTR/L, Research Coordinator
  - Jeanne Roberts, Coordinator of Publication Services
- Affiliate Faculty.....**
- Elin Doval, Ph.D., Virginia State University
  - Shedrick McCall, Ed.D., at Virginia State University
  - Jenelle Pitt, Ph.D., California State University -- Fresno
  - Paola Premuda Conti, Ph.D., Universidad de la Republica (Uruguay)
  - Mark Richardson, Ph.D., Virginia State University
  - Heidi Villanueva, Ph.D., Virginia Union University
  - Rene Gonzalez, Ph.D., University of Texas -- Pan America
- Consultants.....**
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  - Philip Rumrill, Ph.D
  - Keith Wilson, Ph.D.
- Advisory Board.....**
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