

"For the moment,
there is no doctor"



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Applying a Socio-cultural Lens

Health Disparities Impacting Birthing People in Puerto Rico



No relevant disclosures



Objectives

1. Summarize institutional and structural inequities by recognizing the unjust history of gynecologic health in Puerto Rico
2. Explore the unique disparities facing the Puerto Rican healthcare system through the lens of social determinants of health
3. Describe the challenges of delivering prenatal care
4. Discuss how adding certified PA-C's Asociados Médicos to the health infrastructure of Puerto Rico would directly impact obstetric and gynecologic health outcomes



Historical Lens

An Unjust History

In 1955 John Rock and Gregory Pincus identified Puerto Rico as the perfect spot to test oral contraceptive pills (OCPs)

- Overpopulated island
- Easy population to study
- Poor/uneducated women

Questionable ethics

- Vulnerable population
- Ignored side effects (17% participants reported nausea, vomiting, headache)
- 3 young women died, no investigation
- Lack of informed consent



La Operación

*Forced
Sterilization*



Colonization



"Some scholars have argued that colonialism is a social determinant of health, resulting in a state of forced dependency and lack of self-determination in the face of structural challenges that adversely affect living conditions."

~Carlos Rodriguez-Diaz, PhD, MPHE



Snapshot of Puerto Rico

Population ~3.2 million

Largest of the 5 US Colonies

All Puerto Ricans are US Citizens

<10,000 Physicians

440 OBGYN Physicians



Social Determinants of Health

- Unequal application of federal policies
- Unequal distribution of funding
- Higher rates of preterm births
- Higher rates of asthma, diabetes, CVD, HIV/AIDS
- Higher rates of gender-based violence
- Food insecurity
- Environmental exposures
- Lack of healthcare providers



Medicaid in the States vs Puerto Rico^{2,3,4,5}

50 States + DC

Federal funding based on the state's per capita income

Federal funding will cover between 50%-83% of Medicaid costs for each individual state based off of the state's per capita income



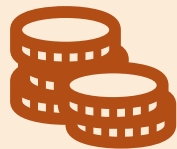
Puerto Rico

Fixed sum for *Medicaid* annually
Capped sum for *Medicare* annually

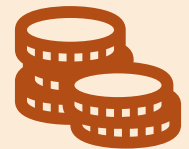


coverage from private insurers

In 2010, it was estimated federal funding only covered 18% of the island's Medicaid spending. In monetary terms, Puerto Rico usually acquires <\$400 million in federal funding per fiscal year, which leaves the island dependent to pay for the remaining \$2.5 billion in Medicaid costs



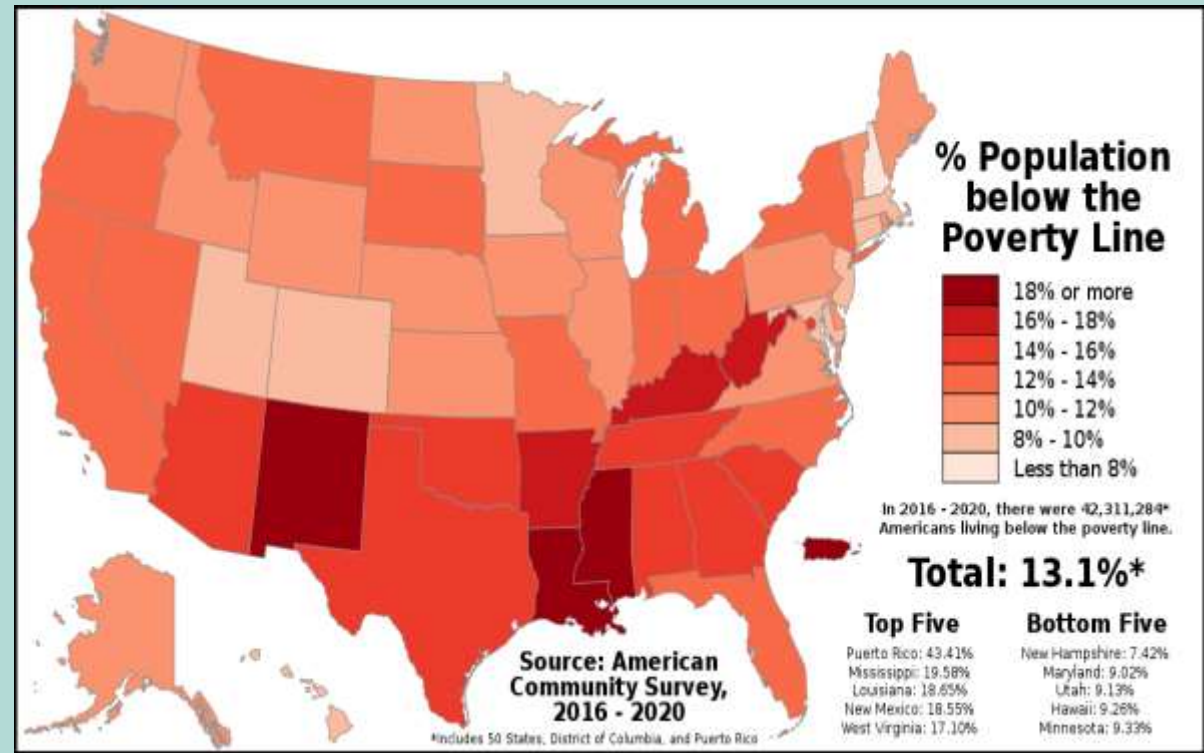
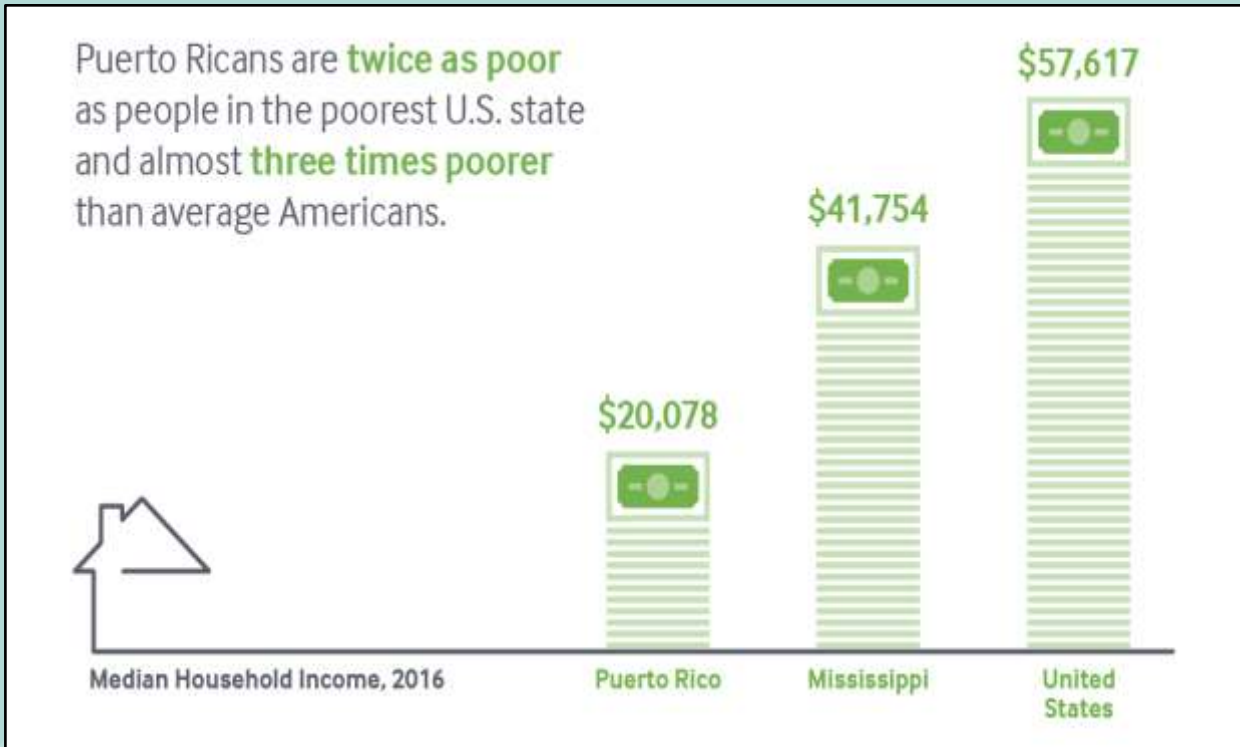
It is estimated that healthcare costs contribute \$25 billion to Puerto Rico's \$72 billion total debt



Health Disparities



- Higher poverty rate
- Lower enrollment/Lower eligibility
- High concentration of healthcare in San Juan metropolitan area
- Physician shortage



As of 2020 ~38% of Puerto Ricans were uninsured⁶



Health Disparities



Challenges in Delivery of Primary vs Specialty Care

Primary Care⁷

- Many of the primary care providers on the island are reaching the age of retirement
- Puerto Rico has the lowest retention rate of new family medicine physicians in the nation



From Twitter: @MillyMendezpr

Specialty Care^{1,8,9}

- ❖ Median wait time between arrival and hospital admission is 13 hrs
- ❖ 6-12 months to see a pediatric neurologist
- ❖ 2-3 years to see a genetic specialist
- ❖ Specialties with <20 providers
 - Interventional Cardiology
 - Allergy/Immunology
 - Thoracic Surgery





Birth Outcomes

- Infant mortality 4.71 deaths/1,000 births
- Low birthweight 1/10 babies
- Preterm birth rate BMC
 - US 10.5%
 - Puerto Rico 11.6%

Access to Prenatal Care

- 440 OBGYN physicians
 - Metropolitan area saturated
- One study found that 10.8% patients reported postpartum depression, only 50% were asked about depression at their follow up (Bauman et al, 2020)



The sad reality for pregnant women in Puerto Rico: 5-6 hour waits for routine appointments. No chairs provided. Sitting on dirty hospital floors





Are there Physician
Associates in Puerto Rico?

Bienvenida a la
clase de
Español

Hola! Me llamo ... Yo
soy Asociado Médico



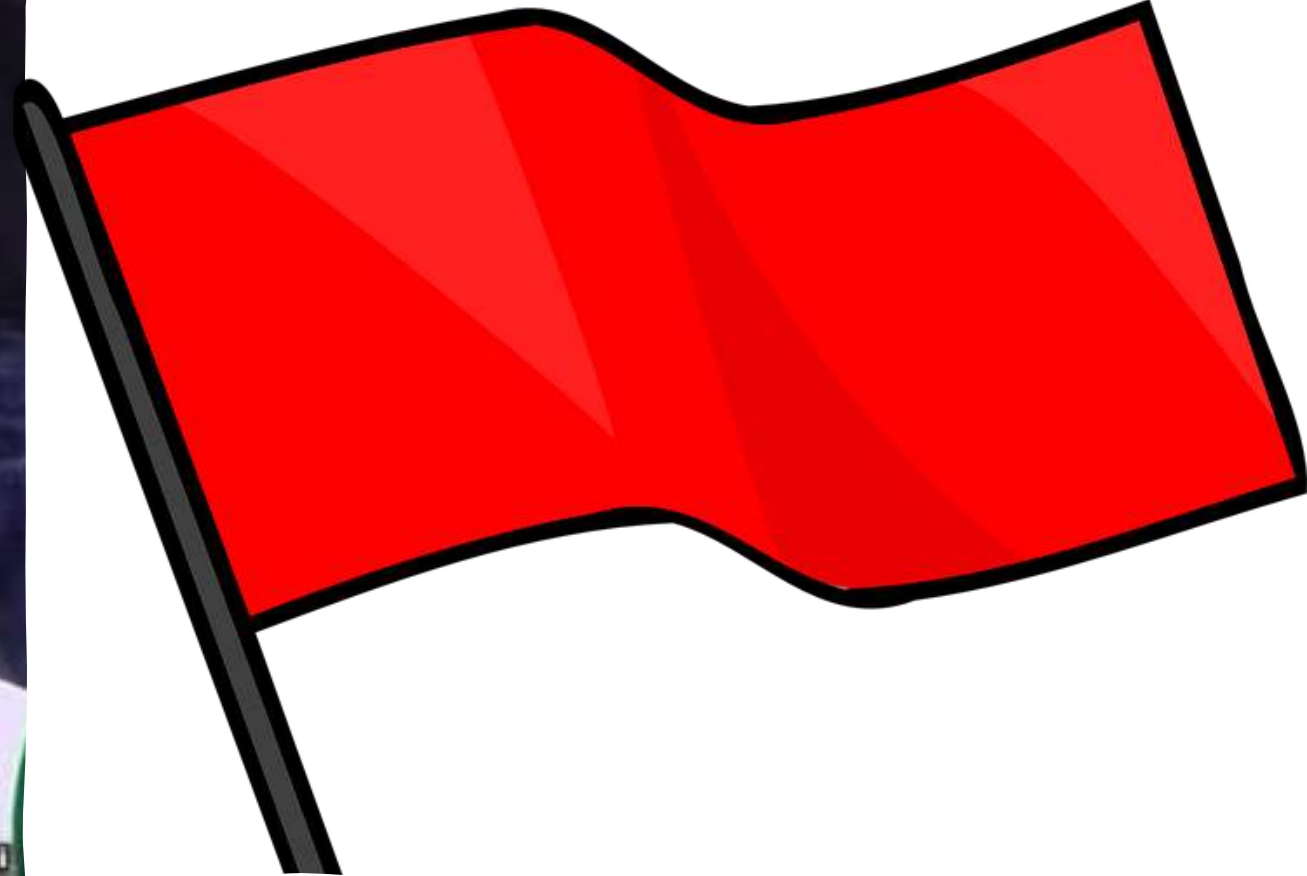
What does the law say?

La Ley No. 71 of 2017

**"Ley para Regular
la Profesión de Médicos Asistentes
de Puerto Rico"**

- sign PA or *médico asistente*
- supervising physician with PR license
- no prescriptive authority
- SP must sign all notes and orders





médicos asistentes \neq Asociados Médicos

Who are Médicos Asistentes?

Levels of training

4 years Medical School

USMLE Step 1 & 2

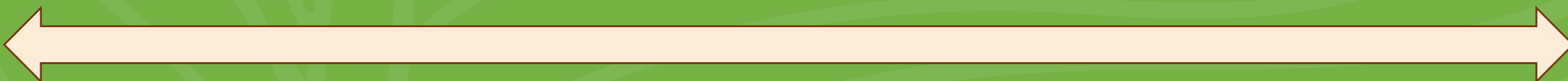
Intern year

Residency

A Timeline: PA's in Puerto Rico

Establishing PAs in Puerto Rico has been a decades long effort

Many changes in the last 5 years



Ley 71	Apply	Students	License	Chapter	Summit
2017	2019	2021	2021	2021	2022
August 5th	February	January	First 3 PA-C's obtain Puerto Rico license	July	August
Allowing the practice of Médicos Asistentes/PA	La Junta begins accepting applications	First cohort of PA students at San Juan Bautista		AAMPUR becomes first AAPA constituent org	Partners in Healthcare for Puerto Rico
		Caguas, PR		New Law	San Juan, PR

February 14 · Episode 174 · 44 min

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The PA Is In >

 Sterling Juarez and 5 others

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Raul Hernandez · 3rd+

39m ...

Hello, are we going to be able to access the PA-C test, I have my PA license without having a chance to take this test. It's there a future for un to get prepared and take this exam?

Thanks and regards,
Raul D. Hernandez, PA, MD

Like | Reply

The NCCPA has stated that only graduates from accredited PA programs can take the PANCE

But there are jobs, right?

Requisitos:

- Doctorado en medicina
- Un (1) año de experiencia previa en puesto similar
- Licencia de Physician Assistant
- Certificado de registro vigente
- Disponibilidad para viajar al área Sur y metro (localidad principal es en el área de Bayamón)
- Bilingüe (Español e Inglés)
- Vehículo propio

Tipo de puesto: Tiempo completo

Salario: \$22.00 la hora

Educación:

- Doctorate (Obligatorio)

Estamos buscando personas que le quieran servir a Puerto Rico como Physician Assistant. La Guardia Estatal de Puerto Rico (cuerpo voluntario militar de la Guardia Nacional de Puerto Rico) esta buscando Medicos Asistentes que deseen pertenecer al Comando Medico 900th.

Debe de tener:


1. Licencia de médico asistente por la Junta de Licenciamiento y Disciplina Médica de Puerto Rico y su registro.
2. Tener buena actitud física (cada caso se evalúa de

First PA Students On the Island

San Juan Bautista School of Medicine
Caguas, PR





biancagraulau 
Puerto Rico



On what she wishes Americans understood about Puerto Rico

“That Puerto Rico is not a place full of helpless people waiting for the US to come save them. The issues that we face today in Puerto Rico are in great part a result of many years of colonization. The US has a responsibility with Puerto Rico. It's not a matter of charity to be given to Puerto Rico; it's a matter of them responding to a place that they have, in fact, benefited from the moment that they occupied it more than 120 years ago.

How do we meet this moment?

Call to Action



INSTAGRAM



FACEBOOK



TWITTER

@ACOSMEDICOPR





Resources

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Questions
&
Answers

