

DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS

GOOD NEWS BULLETIN

Volume 6, Issue 8
August 2026

In this issue, we highlight several impressive faculty and trainee achievements, additions of new faculty and staff members to our UM/HCH family, publications, and platform and poster presentations at major meetings. Kudos to all!

AWARDS AND HONORS



Robin Harrison, MD, was selected as a Scholar in the Program for Educators in Health Professions at the Harvard Macy Institute. This eight-month longitudinal professional development program is designed to cultivate the next generation of leaders in health-professions education. With a strong foundation in educator competencies, the program empowers health care professionals to thrive as effective teachers, adaptive leaders, and innovative change agents in dynamic clinical and academic environments. Participants engage in a comprehensive curriculum that promotes educational innovation, career advancement, self-awareness, professional networking, and the development of impactful educational projects.

WELCOME, NEW FACULTY AND STAFF!



Cesar Igor Mesia, MD, joined the Division of Pediatric Cardiology as a congenital interventional cardiologist and assistant professor of pediatrics, bringing more than 20 years of leadership and expertise in pediatric and congenital interventional cardiology. He provides comprehensive care for patients with congenital heart disease across the lifespan, from fetal life through adulthood.

Born and educated in Peru, Dr. Mesia earned his MD from Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia School of Medicine before moving to the US in 1993. He completed his pediatric residency at the University of Texas Medical Branch, followed by a fellowship in pediatric cardiology at Virginia Commonwealth University, and advanced training in congenital interventional cardiology at Cleveland Clinic, where he began his career in interventional cardiology.

Dr. Mesia's academic interests focus on innovation in congenital catheter-based therapies, advanced imaging, patient safety, and improving outcomes through multidisciplinary care.

A native Spanish speaker with deep roots in Latin American culture, Dr. Mesia brings to South Florida not only extensive clinical experience, but also a strong personal connection to the region's diverse community. Having grown up in Lima along Peru's Pacific coast, he maintains a lifelong appreciation for the sea, beach life, and the outdoors. His favorite Peruvian dish is ceviche. For Dr. Mesia, Miami represents a natural bridge to South America—a place where his heritage, professional experience, and commitment to advancing congenital heart care come together.

Pediatric Residency Advocacy Track

The new Pediatric Residency Advocacy Track is off to a tremendous start! **Sabrina Benitez, MD**, and **Oluwatobi (Tobi) Olaomi, MD**, are the inaugural residents, with pediatric hospitalist **Taylor Rosenbaum, MD, MA**, serving as the track director. During Block 13, Drs. Benitez and Olaomi completed their first-year Advocacy Rotation, gaining a deeper understanding of the community they serve and the vital role pediatricians play as advocates. Through engaging faculty lectures and immersive community experiences, they explored the many facets of pediatric advocacy and developed a greater appreciation for the diverse needs of our patient population.

Their experiences included a community mapping tour of Hialeah, participation in the Street Medicine Clinic, and a day with the Department of Health. They also visited Lotus House, the Injury Free Miami bus, Kristi House, and Sant La, gaining firsthand insight into the organizations and resources that support children, families, and communities throughout Miami. Complementing these experiences were outstanding lectures from faculty on a wide range of advocacy strategies and issues affecting our city, state, nation, and, at times, the global community.

The month culminated with Drs. Benitez and Olaomi presenting advocacy topics that will serve as the foundation for their capstone projects during the second and third years of the track. Dr. Benitez focused on immigrant health, while Dr. Olaomi explored menstrual health in Miami's Haitian community. Dr. Rosenbaum could not have been prouder of Sabrina and Tobi, and is deeply grateful to the faculty and residents whose enthusiasm, expertise, and support helped make this inaugural rotation such a meaningful and impactful experience. Their dedication to advocacy is already making a difference and sets an exciting foundation for the years ahead!

For more information on the Advocacy Track or ways to get involved, email Taylor Rosenbaum at tmr142@miami.edu.

Faculty Lecturers:

- Lisa Gwynn
- Jonathan Tolentino
- Ashwini Ajjegowda
- Malaika Woody
- Wendy De La Rua
- Bryan Leyva
- Farah Mahmoud
- Montserrat Corbera-Hincapie
- Maura Alvarez
- Oneith Cadiz
- Lyse Deus
- Hector Chavez
- Nicole Torres
- Valerie Thompson
- Sarah Sukkar
- Thilani Samarakoon
- Larissa Montas Bravo
- Melissa Gonzalez
- Barbara Sorondo
- Anjali Saxena
- Taylor Rosenbaum

Resident Lecturers:

- Andrea Leon
- Akshaya Mahalingam
- Allison Ong

Site Visit Organizers:

- Robin Harrison
- Armen Henderson
- Lisa Gwynn
- Michelle Schalant



KUDOS



Yaray Agosto, PhD, MPH, a Postdoctoral Associate in the Division of Clinical Psychology, has been awarded funding through the NIH ECHO Program's Opportunities and Innovation Fund (OIF). Her two-year project, "Identifying Disability Type, Functional Limitations, and Obesity Risk Among ECHO Children," will leverage data from the nationwide ECHO Cohort to clarify the disability-obesity relationship in children three to nine years old. By examining how disability characteristics relate to obesity outcomes and modifiable lifestyle behaviors, this OIF project aims to generate developmentally and clinically relevant insights to inform inclusive, early prevention strategies.

PRESENTATIONS

The School Health Initiative team, including psychologists and social workers, attended the Health Connect Conference in Miami-Dade County, where this year's theme was "Together for Healthier Schools and Communities." As part of the conference, our postdoctoral fellow, **Chloe Cristian**, presented on the use of distress tolerance skills in schools, sharing practical strategies with community mental health providers to support student well-being and resilience.



Before the start of the new school year, **Juan Solano, MD** and **Jennifer Coto, PhD**, presented at Miami-Dade County Public Schools' annual training for school psychologists, providing practical guidance for supporting students following concussion and traumatic brain injury. Dr. Solano presented on the medical management of concussion, while Dr. Coto presented "From Injury to Classroom: Understanding and Supporting Students with Pediatric Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)," with a focus on the cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and school-based needs of students with pediatric TBI. Together, their presentations highlighted the importance of coordinated medical and school-based support to help students successfully return to learning.

EVENTS

2026 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment



Aida Chaparro, MD, and **Daniela Ner, PhD**, delivered a platform presentation at the 2026 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment, held in Washington, DC, in August 2026. Their presentation, *“Implementing Breastfeeding Among Women With HIV: Lessons Learned to Strengthen Ryan White Part D-Supported Maternal-Child Health Services,”* highlighted valuable lessons and strategies for strengthening maternal-child health services and supporting breastfeeding among women living with HIV.

They also provided two training sessions on July 31 for the Florida Department of Health WIC and Nutrition Program in Miami-Dade County. The Breastfeeding and HIV training featured a multidisciplinary panel of experts, including Sharon Burbello, PhD, CDE, RN, Maternal Family Health Liaison at Jackson Health System; Nelly Diaz-Mendez, APRN, from the UM OB/GYN Department; and Stephanie Vasquez, LCSW, from the UM Division Pediatric Infectious Diseases.

RETIREMENT CELEBRATION

On July 29, we celebrated the retirements of **Carolyn Abitbol, MD**, Division Chief of Pediatric Nephrology, 43 years of service; **Jayanthi Chandar, MD**, Medical Director of Pediatric Kidney Transplant, 31 years of service; **Alan Delamater, PhD**, Division Chief of Pediatric Psychology, 34 years of service; **Walter Lambert, MD**, Division Chief Child Protection Team, 38 years of service; and **Kathleen Vergara, MA**, Director of the Debbie Institute, 39 years of service.

Throughout their distinguished careers, each has brought exceptional expertise, leadership, and dedication to the Department of Pediatrics. Their collective contributions have had a lasting impact on our colleagues and trainees and, most importantly, on the children and families we serve. We are deeply grateful for their years of service and the many ways they have helped shape our department and strengthen our commitment to excellence in pediatric care. While we will certainly miss their presence, we celebrate all they have accomplished and wish them a fulfilling, joyful, and well-deserved retirement!

Daniel Armstrong, PhD, Walter Lambert, MD, and Glenn Flores, MD, FAAP



Jason Jent, PhD, Eileen Davis, PhD, Alan Delamater, PhD, ABPP, and Glenn Flores, MD, FAAP



Lynn Miskiel, Daniel Armstrong, PhD, Maria Cecilia Chacin, Kathleen Vergara, MA, and Glenn Flores, MD, FAAP



Carolyn Abitbol, MD, Jayanthi Chandar, MD, and Glenn Flores, MD, FAAP

MEDIA APPEARANCES

1. Article featuring School Health Program: How Student Champions Are Changing Conversations About Suicide and Mental Health. *InventUM*: [How Student Champions Are Changing Conversations About Suicide and Mental Health - InventUM](#)

PUBLICATIONS

2. **Flores, G.** Saving children's lives through science and public health: Winning the war against misinformation. The Society for Pediatric Research's 2026 Douglas K. Richardson Award presentation. *Pediatric Research*. July 30, 2026. PMID: 42533078 DOI: [10.1038/s41390-026-05348-y](#)
3. Segal JE, Price T, Gestrich C, Subramanian S, Kitsko D, Gardner PA, Snyderman CH, Xavier F, **McCormick M**. PIK3CA somatic mosaicism in a skull base intraosseous slow flow vascular malformation. *Journal of Vascular Anomalies*. 2026; 7(3):e150. doi:10.1097/JOVA.0000000000000150.
4. **McCormick M**, Kalpatthi R. Frequent use of hematologic testing in children admitted for nonaccidental trauma. *Journal of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology*. August 1, 2026. PMID: 42372241 DOI: [10.1097/MPH.0000000000003236](#)
5. **Alvarez OA, Bayes Santos L**, De Castro LM. Sickle cell disease, sickle cell trait, and Hemoglobin C Trait in Spanish-speaking Latin America: A systematic review. *Blood Global Hematology*. August 20, 2026. [doi.org/10.1016/j.bglo.2026.100152](#)
6. Satrom KM, Kerns E, Schissel M, Garber M, Monti J, Bakken EH, Gallois J, Hampton EP, Sarathy L, Stipelman CH, Widmer KM, Magee S, Chang PW, **AAP LIGHT Collaborative**. A national quality improvement collaborative to reduce subthreshold phototherapy for jaundice. *Pediatrics*. July 1, 2026. PMID: 42235950 DOI: [10.1542/peds.2025-071494](#)
7. Forrest CB, Koenigsberg LJ, Schwebel DC, Bassuk AG, Dennery PA, **Flores G**, Murray KO, Perera U, Rivara FP, Kottyan LC. Recent trends and structural patterns in NIH pediatric research funding, 2015-2024. *Pediatric Research*. August 13, 2026. PMID: 42595824 DOI: [10.1038/s41390-026-05379-5](#)
8. **Ali SS, Agrawal PB**. Role of next generation sequencing in neonatal diagnosis and screening. *Journal Neuromuscular Disorders*. July 13, 2026. PMCID: [PMC13434914](#) DOI: [10.1177/22143602251394481](#)
9. **Ali SS, Tamase Newsam M, Agrawal PB**. Rapid genomic sequencing in the NICU: Who to test and why. *European Journal of Human Genetics*. August 6, 2026. PMID: 42562942 DOI: [10.1038/s41431-026-02207-6](#)

10. **Li, Q.**, Morton, S.U., **Luo, S.**, Stark, Z., **Agrawal, P.B.** Challenges and approaches to genetic variants of uncertain significance in clinical practice and research. *Genome Medicine*. August 10, 2026. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13073-026-01740-9>
11. Narayan PR, Sabir S, Jayvas, D., Doan, R., **Li, Q.**, Anderson, K. J., Chen, S., Felker, M. V., Frigeni, M., Giummo, C., Kotlarek, J., Saenz, M., Schatz, K., Sidhu, A., Stoler, J., Sun, L. R., Svihovec, S., Weaver, D. D., **Agrawal, P. B.**, Roberts, A. E., Morton, S. U. Identifying the potential role of Missense KIRREL3 variants in neurodevelopmental phenotypes: A case series. *American Journal of Medical Genetics Part A*. August 13, 2026. PMID: 42590949 DOI: [10.1002/ajmg.a.70264](https://doi.org/10.1002/ajmg.a.70264)

Please send your good news to Managing Editor Rosa Tamayo at rpx352@med.miami.edu, so that we may feature it in future *Bulletins*.