

Fernando Mendoza, MD

HSHPS Member-at-Large

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It would be an understatement to say that HSHPS Member at Large Fernando Mendoza, MD, MPH, is one busy man. He counts being Professor of Pediatrics at Stanford Medical School, Chief of the Division of General Pediatrics at Lucile Packard Children's Hospital, and Associate Dean for Minority Advising and Programs at Stanford Medical School as his major professional achievements. Thankfully, Dr. Mendoza was able to take time out of his hectic schedule to talk about his career, his goals, and his longstanding interest of encouraging Latinos to join the health field.

How did you become interested in your current field?

When I was in high school, I decided that I wanted to be a pediatrician. After my pediatric residency, I attended the Harvard School of Public Health. While I was there, I met a physician named Dr. Robert Haggerty, Academic General of Pediatrics, who encouraged me to consider an academic career. I returned to Stanford for my fellowship in academic pediatrics, looking into health issues for Latino children. For the past 30 years, I have been at Stanford, working and researching in the fields of Latino health issues and Latino medical students.

What is the focus of your professional career and research at this time?

I have two areas of research. The first area lies in issues of minority health. In this area, I focus on activities of development for faculty and medical students from Latino backgrounds, access to health service, and workforce issues. My second area of research is in health issues for Latino children. In this area, I focus on children's health issues such as obesity and health profiles for immigrant Latinos. I [also] conduct and present my research for use as a source of information for clinicians and policy makers.

What are your long-term career goals?

I plan to continue to help Latinos pursue education in health profession fields, and to encourage their advancement into leadership and faculty positions. I would like to learn more about healthcare reform and the impact it will have on the Latino population. I will be seeking to conduct research on the positive and negative impacts of the impending healthcare reform on the Latino community.

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What advice would you like to give to graduate students who are interested in becoming faculty?

There are so many opportunities to pursue. Find an interesting question about Latino health that most interests you and develop yourself to answer those questions. In your pursuit of knowledge, follow the process to become faculty. Then use your development and knowledge to teach and influence other institutions.

Any final thoughts?

Young Latinos should be encouraged in their interests in the fields of science, math, and people. The field of health is wide open for Latino students. If the medical area is not of interest, other areas are available, such as dental and mental health. There are all opportunities for helping others.

In order for the population of Latinos in this country to succeed, they must have a healthy background and lifestyle and access to healthcare. This will only happen if more Latinos become involved in the healthcare system. Involvement in the field of healthcare offers great rewards and this is the best of any time to pursue this field. There are great amounts of new growth in the industry in this country and Latinos should be part of that.