

# Olveen Carrasquillo, MD, MPH

HSHPS Board Member

Associate Professor of Medicine

Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine

University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine

Co-founder/Vice President, Latinos for National Health Insurance



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Dr. Olveen Carrasquillo was always interested in Hispanic health issues as a Puerto Rican kid growing up in the Bronx. Where some health professionals have an Aha! moment that is the catalyst for their career in medicine, Olveen says it wasn't that at all.

“It was growing up in the Bronx and seeing the differences. I was always exposed to the differences in different groups. It was pretty clear why certain people did much better than others,” he said.

Dr. Carrasquillo graduated from the Sophie Davis School of Bio-Medical Education at City College and obtained his MD degree from the New York University School of Medicine. He completed a three-year internal medicine residency at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, Harvard's two-year General Medicine Fellowship, and an MPH from the Harvard School of Public Health.

Currently, Dr. Carrasquillo is a Professor of Medicine and Public Health Sciences at the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine. He also acts as the School of Medicine's Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine and is Division Head of Health Service Research and Policy in the Department of Public Health Sciences.

When he was recruited to work in Miami, he was “impressed with the population and saw a lot of good potential.”

“It's much more diverse in Miami [compared to New York],” said Dr. Carrasquillo. “Everyone from Latin America is here.”

Dr. Carrasquillo and his colleagues at the medical school partner with a variety of community groups to conduct relevant research within the area.

“We want the community members to have a strong say in what they want us to look at.”

Dr. Carrasquillo's approach to tackling the issue of recruiting and maintaining diversity in the health field addresses not only the pipeline – he calls out the system.

“Test scores are a way to keep certain students down,” he said, referring to the MCAT scores. “It is not just scores but who you are. What’s more important? The person with the background of privilege or someone who’s done it on their own their whole life?”

He calls for admissions departments to become holistic in how they admit students and emphasizes the need to partner with institutions and serve as mentor to “empower those systems.”

When not teaching, Dr. Carrasquillo continues to challenge barriers through his involvement with various organizations, namely serving as Acting President and Policy Director for Latinos for National Health Insurance (LNHI) an organization he cofounded whose mission is to “educate Latino organizations, individuals, government officials, and community leaders about the need to establish a comprehensive, universal, equitable and affordable program of national health insurance where *everyone* is covered from birth.”

“My joke is if we have ever achieve national health insurance, then I would retire,” he said.

Looking forward in his career, it seems there is not much room for pause. He sees a lot more that needs to be done. “I do want to continue doing the work I’m doing. I see myself in a bigger role running larger health systems.”