

**COVID-19/Environmental Health**  
**List of community engagement and environmental research translation activities**  
**during the COVID-19 pandemic**

**Gredia Huerta-Montanez, MD, FAAP**

I am the board-certified pediatrician specialized in pediatric environmental health who conducts and supervises the neurodevelopmental evaluation of infants and young children participating in CRECE/ECHO projects. The activities described below have promoted close collaborations with healthcare providers' professional associations in Puerto Rico, federal and local government and NGOs, and represent an effort to adapt my role as one of the co-principal investigators of these projects during the COVID-19 pandemic. These activities have broadened our inroads into community engagement and research translation to include the healthcare workforce providing services to pregnant and postpartum women and their infants and the childcare workforce. These activities have sought to prevent environmental exposures and the prevention of SARS-CoV-2 transmission in PR. These activities have also been an opportunity to broadly distribute the educational materials developed by our research consortium and to promote the work that the projects are doing on PR.

I have been named PR Early Childhood Champion and Climate Change Champion by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

I have been elected as member of the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council of Environmental Health this past April.

I was invited by the American Academy of Pediatrics to co-author the guidelines for environmental health/climate change in US schools.

**List of activities (copies of power point presentations and reference documents are available upon request):**

**Activity:** In-person presentation to the Head Start health personnel representing all Head Start and Early Head Start Centers in PR

**Title (Spanish):** *Nuevo Coronavirus: Implicaciones para los Centros EHS/HS* (The novel coronavirus: implications for Early Head Start and Head Start Centers)

**Target audience:** Daycare and Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) Program personnel (attendees: 70)

**Date:** February 21, 2020

**Description and Purpose:** To orient EHS/HS Programs healthcare personnel on what is known at the moment about the novel coronavirus and influenza prevention.

**Activity:** Webinar in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics

**Name of presentation (Spanish):** Preparación para la Transmisión Comunitaria de la Enfermedad COVID-19: Aplicación en Oficinas Médicas Pediátricas de las Guías Publicadas por los Centros para Control y Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC) (How to prepare for the community transmission of COVID-19: application of the CDC guidelines for medical offices)

**Target audience:** PR pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists (attendees: 40 pediatricians)

**Date:** March 4, 2020

**Description and Purpose:** To brief local pediatricians on the guidelines and recommendations issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization on how to provide primary care services to children during the pandemic. The main objective was to assist pediatricians in the process of adapting their medical practices the challenges posed by this environmental threat and to better protect pregnant women, infants, children, and adolescents they serve.

**Activity:** Webinar in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics

**Title (Spanish):** Preparación y respuesta de los centros de cuidado, HS/EHS ante la epidemia de COVID-19 (Preparedness and response of daycare centers, EHS and HS to the COVID-19 pandemic)

**Target audience:** Daycare and Early Head Start (EHS) and Head Start (HS) Program personnel (attendees: 170)

**Date:** March 16, 2020

**Description and Purpose:** To orient local daycare and EHS/HS Programs on their important role in advising families on how to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 despite the closure of their facilities. We provided resources to support staff, families and children in PR, including the HS centers that serve young children participating in CRECE/ECHO.

**Activity:** Webinar in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics

**Title:** Understanding and promoting Infant Development from 0-12 months of life during the COVID-19 pandemic

**Target audience:** General public and Daycare and Early Head Start and Head Start Program personnel (number of attendees: 640)

**Date:** April 18, 2020

**Description and Purpose:** To educate parents on infant development, nutrition and safe sleep from 0-12 months of age. We covered these important topics and the importance not to overlook them during the lock-down. We stressed importance of maintaining close communication with their health care providers during this worldwide public health emergency. I discussed the value of immunization and the well-child care visit.

**Activity:** Facebook live presentation in collaboration with the American College of Obstetricians-PR Chapter

**Title:** La lactancia materna durante la pandemia de COVID-19 (Maternal breastfeeding during the COVID-19 pandemic)

**Target audience:** General public (approximately 6,000 viewers through different platforms)

**Date:** April 2020

**Purpose:** To discuss the most common challenges that lactating women have amid the novel coronavirus pandemic. During the activity we addressed the most common questions that women have regarding breastfeeding and postpartum issues. PROTECT, CRECE and ECHO staff distributed the invitation to the cohort participants. They received practical steps to better protect their infant and themselves from COVID-19 transmission. We discussed the importance of maintaining close communication with their healthcare providers and the prevention of environmental exposures, including prevention of phthalates exposure by avoiding the use of plastic containers for storing maternal breast milk.

**Activity:** Drafting the obstetrics and neonatology for inpatient healthcare in PR with the collaboration of PR-ACOG, PR-AAP, the COVID Medical Task Force and the PR Association of Hospitals

**Target audience:** All physicians providing services to pregnant women and neonates in Puerto Rico; Association of Hospitals of Puerto Rico.

**Date:** document submitted on April 12, 2020

**Title (Spanish):** RECOMENDACIONES PARA LA PREVENCIÓN DE LA TRANSMISIÓN DE COVID-19 EN EL ENTORNO OBSTÉTRICO/NEONATAL (Recommendations for the prevention of the transmission of COVID-19 in the obstetrics/neonatal hospital units)

**Description and purpose:** I asked the local American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) president, Dr. Nabal Bracero, to raise the concern about the lack of formal recommendations in PR for the -pre, -intra and postpartum medical care of pregnant women and their infants amid the COVID-19 pandemic. I convened a group of local multidisciplinary experts on the care of pregnant women and their neonates, including some of the physicians who have been long-standing collaborators with PROTECT and CRECE. I organized and led a videoconference with pediatricians, neonatologists, perinatologists and obstetricians with relevant expertise. During this meeting, I presented the main aims of the document which included: to prevent the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among pregnant women, infants and healthcare workers in PR in the OB/neonatology settings; to adapt the current science-based guidelines and recommendations for the management of prenatal, intrapartum, perinatal and postnatal care of pregnant women and their infants; to review the research literature published on prevention of the transmission of SARS-CoV-2 among pregnant women

and their infants considering all the possible clinical scenarios; to discuss how to better adapt such recommendations to the reality of the healthcare system in PR; to present these guidelines in culturally-appropriate Spanish, considering the need of overcoming language barriers among our healthcare workers. I was appointed lead author and coordinated the revision by the convened specialists. Completing the document required multiple revisions. This work has become the official reference adopted by the hospitals that provide obstetrics and neonatology/nursery/NICU services on the island. It was submitted on April 12, 2020. It was adapted and made public by the Puerto Rico Department of Health COVID-19 task force on April 13, 2020. Since then it has become the standard reference for the inpatient and postpartum medical care of pregnancy women and their infants.

**Activity:** Publication In collaboration with the American College of Obstetricians (ACOG)

**Date:** Published on the May 2020 edition of the journal *Revista Puertorriqueña de Medicina y Salud Pública* (Puerto Rican journal of Medicine and Public Health)

**Purpose:** I was invited to co-author an article on COVID-19 and pregnancy with emphasis on the importance of prevention, medical care guidelines and the support of breastfeeding in the context of the pandemic.

**Name of publication:** *COVID-19 and pregnancy*; journal: *La Revista Puertorriqueña de Medicina y Salud Pública (MSP)*: <https://medicinaysaludpublica.com/>

**Activity: Webinar in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics**  
*Prevention of COVID-19 in the pediatric patient*

**Target audience:** PR pediatricians and pediatric subspecialists (200 attendees from PR, continental US)

**Date:** March 25, 2020

In collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics

**Purpose:** To continue briefing local pediatricians on the guidelines and recommendations issued by CDC, AAP, and WHO on how to provide primary care services to children. The presentation included the participation of pediatricians, neonatologists, pulmonary and cardiology specialists, and breastfeeding-certified specialists.

**Activity:** TV interview in Telemundo network program *Dra. Mamá*

**Target audience:** general public

**Description and purpose:** To address questions from the general public on COVID-19 prevention among infants and young children in PR.

**Date:** Program was aired on March 21, 2020

**Activity:** TV interview for WIPR (local public TV station) news program

**Target audience:** general public

**Date:** Program was aired on WIPR as a series of 3 episodes aired on March 9, 10 and 11, 2020

**Description and purpose:** To discuss: how to talk to children and adolescents about COVID-19; the importance of emotional and mental health among children during the pandemic; the prevention of COVID-19 among the pediatric population in PR; the indications for the influenza vaccine; the need to maintain a close communication with healthcare providers; to discuss the myths and what science tells us about COVID-19.

**Activity:** Live interview aired on the radio station Radio Isla 1320

**Date:** March 19, 2020

**Target audience:** general public

**Purpose:** To discuss the topic of COVID-19 prevention in children and what parents should know about child medical care during these challenging times.

**Activity:** (In collaboration with ProGyn-Puerto Rico Obstetricians Society) Interview with the local newspaper *El Nuevo Día*

**Title:** *Guía práctica para las embarazadas: Consejos para las madres lactantes*  
(Guidance for pregnant women during COVID-19 pandemic: recommendations for lactating women)

**Date:** Published on April 23, 2020

**Target audience:** general public

**Purpose:** To discuss the topic of COVID-19 prevention in the neonate and breastfeeding during the pandemic.

**Activity:** publication on AAP electronic media

**Date:** April 22, 2020

As part of the celebration of Earth Day, the American Academy of Pediatrics invited me to participate in their Blog AAP Voices Series as one of the pediatricians describing the health impacts of climate change. It was posted also as an Earth Day collection thread on Twitter and Facebook

<https://twitter.com/AmerAcadPeds/status/1252964081285423104>

<https://www.facebook.com/AmerAcadPeds/posts/10157475772135432>

**Activity:** Webinar in collaboration with the American Academy of Pediatrics

**Date:** June 3, 2020

**Target audience:** General public (attendees: over 200 participants via facebook live and zoom platform)

**Title:** *Preparación para esta temporada de huracanes: familias con necesidades especiales* (Preparedness for this hurricane season: families with special needs)

**Description and purpose:** To remind the general public on the need to prepare for this hurricane season while aware of needs for COVID-19 prevention among the most

vulnerable populations, specifically families with children with special needs, including people with neurodevelopmental conditions.

**Activity:** Virtual presentation

**Date:** June 5, 2020

**Target audience:** PROTECT/CRECE/ECHO team

**Title:** *Rol de los proyectos de investigación apoyando a la población pediátrica en PR durante la pandemia de COVID-19* (Role of research projects supporting the pediatric population in PR during the COVID-19 pandemic)

**Description and purpose:** To present a review of science-based information on COVID-19 in the pediatric population with global, US and local data; to present how our research projects have played a vital role in supporting communities during the COVID-19 pandemic. We presented a case that highlighted how the continued research effort and the inclusion of pediatricians as part of the research team have translated into demonstrable assistance with the essential medical care they need during this emergency.