

2021 MOLA Scholars



Alejandro Carrillo

Alex was born and raised in the southeast side of Chicago. He is a first year student at the University of Illinois at Chicago pursuing a clinical doctorate degree in occupational therapy (OTD). His research experience as a research assistant in the Model of Human Occupation Clearinghouse consists of international conference planning, data entry/analysis, and current research regarding the efficacy of self-testing methods and persuasive mobile health technologies among underserved individuals in the Chicagoland area for COVID-19. His interests outside of academia include martial arts, sports, and spending time with loved ones.



Susana E. Berrios

Susana E. Berrios is a rising fourth year medical student at the University of Illinois College of Medicine. She was born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area and received a BA in History from the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to medical school, Susana completed 6 years of clinical research in family planning. Her MOLA project centers on understanding the male Latinx experience with erectile dysfunction and infertility. She hopes to one day be an academic urologist where she can educate doctors in training while serving Tribal Nations and rural communities



Celyn Bregio

Celyn is a first-year medical student at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. She is originally from Cuba and grew up in Miami, Florida. She obtained a bachelor's degree in Chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and spent a year conducting basic science research at the National Institute of Health upon graduation. As a first-generation immigrant, Celyn has been exposed first-hand to the disparities experienced by Latinos when navigating the health care system. Through her MOLA project, she will be studying language concordance between patients and providers in oncology care.



Iovana Bonfante

Iovana is a first-year medical student at Loyola University Chicago Stritch School of Medicine. She is originally from Cartagena, Colombia and received a BA in Human Biology from CUNY- Hunter College in NYC, her second home. Iovana has previous research experience in understanding the role of spirituality in Latino patients with advanced cancer. Currently, she teaches Medical Spanish to her peers and serves as the WC4BL Chapter Co-President, LMSA Vice President & DACA Outreach Coordinator at Stritch. Iovana's MOLA Project will focus on assessing the root causes of homelessness, its connection to the health disparities faced by this community & the development of creative solutions. Iovana's desire to pursue medicine is rooted in her immigrant experience and she aspires to serve communities of color.

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Katherine Brito

Katherine is a first-generation Mexican-American from Santa Ana, CA. She completed her undergraduate work at University of California Berkeley and is a third-year Medical Student at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. Having been raised by a single mother of five children, she believes that access to full spectrum reproductive healthcare is a fundamental human right and intends to dedicate her medical career to ensure that this right is upheld. She is committed to her long-term work with the Latino Medical Student Organization, creating scholarship opportunities for students, and contributing to research that will positively impact the lives of women and their families.



Yesenia Chávez

Yesenia is a 1st-generation immigrant born and raised on the Southeast Side of Chicago. Currently an undergraduate student at Olive Harvey College, passionately advocating for student and community health, she plans on pursuing a career in medicine as a physician. As an active member of her community working to combat social and environmental injustices, she joined political, environmental, and medical organizations to increase civic engagement, expand political and health literacy, and ultimately improve the public's health by understanding the various sectors that affect it. Her project will focus on environmental health in Latinx communities in Chicago.



Nicolás Francone

Nicolás is from East Lyme, CT and was raised in Argentina. He is currently a fourth-year medical student at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and is applying for a residency in Obstetrics & Gynecology. As a former NIH research trainee, he helped study and implement methods to address the Black maternal health crisis through community health engagement. He also has a research interest in the implementation of medical Spanish courses as a health equity initiative to curb health disparities due to patient-physician language discordance. His MOLA project will evaluate a medical Spanish curriculum in genitourinary health.



Sergio González

Sergio is a medical student at the University of Illinois; he is also co-chair for MOLA's Mentorship Committee. As a first-generation college student, he understands the importance of language as a fundamental contributor to the relationship between social strata and health. He grew up by Midway Airport in Chicago, and his family is from Jalisco, Mexico. Over the last few years, he has been working on community engagement projects and hopes to develop lifelong ties to the health initiatives and needs of the Latino working class in the US. He strives to be a Med/Peds Physician, and in his free time, he loves to garden, read, go to coffee shops, and listen to unsolved mystery podcasts.

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Susana Gutiérrez

Susana grew up in the north suburbs of Chicago and is now a first-year student pursuing her Doctorate of Physical Therapy at Northwestern University. Her graduate research focused on fall prevention in older adults, and this is when she noticed the lack of Latinx representation in rehabilitation research. Susana's MOLA project will analyze the inclusion of Latinx participants in physical therapy research. Susana's career goals are to become a neurological physical therapist, focus her treatments on the Latinx community and increase the diversity of rehabilitation studies



David Velásquez

David is a first-year medical student at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. After graduating from Loyola University Chicago with concentrations in Molecular Biology and Neuroscience, David spent one year conducting gastroenterology research at the Knapp Center for Biomedical Discovery. Being from Chicago, David aims to advocate for underserved patients within his community through research and applicable solutions. David will focus on developing technology-based interventions to increase health literacy in Latinx patients through his MOLA project. In his free time, David enjoys playing piano and listening to good music.

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Lisandra Ochoa

Lisandra's research goals are related to resolving health inequities. Her prior research has involved childhood obesity in the Latinx community, to personal projects targeting teen pregnancies. Lisandra's MOLA project will evaluate preventive health services among Spanish-speaking communities. She aspires to be a Pediatrician who is a patient advocate and creates safe spaces for her patients and their parents. Due to her love of teaching and mentoring she also plans to work at an academic hospital where she can teach the next generation of physicians and at the same time instill in them cultural sensitivity and a desire to help the underserved.