

THE
Flexner
DISCOVERY
LECTURE SERIES

ELENA FUENTES-AFFLICK, M.D., M.P.H.

ACCULTURATION:
WHAT IMMIGRANTS TEACH US ABOUT BEING AMERICAN

FEBRUARY 26, 2015

4:00 P.M.

208 LIGHT HALL

THE
Flexner
DISCOVERY
LECTURE SERIES

Upcoming Discovery Lecture:

LOUIS STAUDT, M.D., PH.D.

Center for Cancer Research

March 19, 2015

208 Light Hall / 4:00 P.M.

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VANDERBILT  UNIVERSITY
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ACCULTURATION: WHAT IMMIGRANTS TEACH US ABOUT BEING AMERICAN

Since the founding of the country, immigrants have come to the United States for many reasons – for educational opportunities, for economic opportunities, to escape discrimination or oppression, for family reunification, and other reasons. Immigrants are often socioeconomically disadvantaged relative to their native-born counterparts, and socioeconomic disadvantage is generally associated with adverse health outcomes. Thus, health outcomes would be expected to be less favorable among immigrants than US-born individuals.

Early studies of Latinos in the Southwestern US documented surprisingly low utilization of mental health services despite many socioeconomic risk factors, an “epidemiologic paradox.” Since that time, many studies of adult and perinatal outcomes have reported favorable outcomes for less acculturated Latino immigrants relative to their US-born counterparts. However, the data are not uniform across outcomes nor ethnic groups. The conceptual models that have been developed to explain the lower risk of adverse outcomes among less acculturated populations focus on behavioral risk factors, demographic risk factors, and social support. The presentation will focus on our knowledge of the role of acculturation on health outcomes, a discussion of mechanisms, and outline future research directions.



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Dr. Fuentes-Afflick obtained her undergraduate education and medical degrees at the University of Michigan. She completed her residency training at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), where she served as chief resident, followed by a research fellowship at the Phillip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies. She also completed an MPH at the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Fuentes-Afflick’s research has focused on the broad themes of acculturation and immigrant health, with specific emphasis on perinatal and neonatal health disparities and the effect of acculturation on health outcomes. In addition to epidemiologic studies, she has collaborated with Drs. Neal Benowitz and Delia Dempsey to study the metabolism of cotinine in young children and has collaborated with Dr. Roberta Rehm in the School of Nursing on a project to study transition issues for youth with complex medical and developmental needs. Other recent work has addressed the broad implications of breastfeeding and cohort studies of the impact of acculturation on perinatal outcomes.

Dr. Fuentes-Afflick is Chief of Pediatrics at San Francisco General Hospital, Vice Chair of the Department of Pediatrics, and Vice Dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Medicine, all at UCSF. She has served on numerous boards and advisory committees, including the Thrasher Research Fund, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Clinical Scholars Program, the Federal Advisory Committee of the National Children’s Study; the Board of the International Pediatric Research Foundation, the National Advisory Council of the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and the National Advisory Council of the Agency for Healthcare, Research and Quality (AHRQ). In 2010, Dr. Fuentes-Afflick was elected to the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science.
