

## Former postdoc named chief research officer for NIH research partner

By Eddy Ball

Former NIH health disparities trainee Rosemarie Ramos, Ph.D., has landed a position that combines her research interests in epidemiology with her passion for addressing health disparities. In May, Ramos was selected as the founding chief research officer for **CommuniCare** (<http://www.communicaresa.org/>) — a network of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-supported community health centers headquartered in San Antonio.

A key enabling objective for Ramos, in carrying out a collaborative research agenda at CommuniCare, will be utilization of the community engagement infrastructure developed through the NIH Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) program. Preexisting community engagement infrastructure within CommuniCare includes many providers, patients, and community leaders who are always seeking ways to improve chronic disease diagnosis, treatment, and prevention.

“The organization is among the first community health centers in the nation to invest in a research division,” Ramos said, “and I am humbled to have been selected for the position ... It’s a perfect fit for my personality, research interests, and commitment to public health.”

### Building partnerships in the community

Ramos has already identified CTSA-affiliated, practice-based research networks that have expressed interest in being partners in CommuniCare’s research agenda. These partnerships will also align with the mission of the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, to generate innovative methods for enhancing the implementation of diagnostics and therapeutics across a wide range of human health needs, diseases, and conditions.

CommuniCare is a pioneer in this effort, since no other community health center in Texas has attempted to establish a research office. Ramos considers herself to be well suited for leading this pioneering effort, due to her training under NIEHS Director Emeritus **Kenneth Olden, Ph.D.**, a mentor she considers to be a true pioneer in the area of collaborative research to reduce health disparities. Building on her doctorate in epidemiology and her master’s in public health from the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health, her fellowship training honed her skills for establishing the foundation for fruitful research in a community health setting.

### Career development at NIEHS and beyond

While at NIEHS, Ramos was active in the NIEHS Trainees Assembly (NTA) and career development programs organized by then Office of Fellows’ Career Development (OFCD) Director **Diane Klotz, Ph.D.**, experiences that served her well as she negotiated the winding career path back to her geographical and professional roots (see [stories](https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Rose+Ramos+NIEHS&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8) (<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Rose+Ramos+NIEHS&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8>)).

According to Ramos, without access to NIEHS-sponsored career development, she would not have pursued the varied post-training career opportunities that enabled her to be competitive for her new position. Although the job market is a tough climate, Ramos explained, it can be successfully navigated by the NIEHS trainee, because of the exceptional training environment at the Institute. She advised current trainees to take full advantage of what’s available and “Use it to the max!”

Ramos completed her NIH health disparities fellowship in 2008, following Olden’s move to create a new school of public health at the City University of New York (CUNY), and returned to her hometown of San Antonio to work with public health consultant **Fernando Guerra, M.D.**, (<http://www.phaboard.org/about-phab/phab-board-of-directors/fernando-guerra/>) director of health for the San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) and a colleague of Olden’s. In her role as public health project advisor for Metro Health, Ramos supported the pilot phase of the San Antonio A1C diabetes registry. Upon completion of this pilot project, she joined the epidemiology division of the U.S. Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine, which has received NIEHS funding for projects related to Agent Orange exposure.

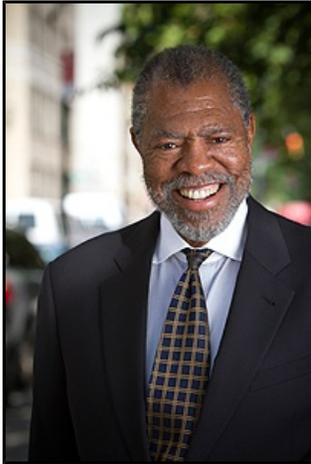


*In addition to her full-time duties as the NIEHS health disparities fellow, Ramos was co-chair of the NTA steering committee, served on the Diversity Council’s Hispanic Heritage Committee, contributed to the Environmental Factor, and hosted guest lectures on women’s health and endocrine disrupting compounds, and healthcare/prevention outreach in Hispanic communities along the U.S.-Mexico border. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*CommuniCare’s logo and slogan communicate its dual focus on prevention and treatment for the entire community — “For All. For Life. Para Todos. Por Vida.”*

In 2011, Ramos assumed the role of senior scientist within the U.S. Air Force Medical Service Office of the Chief Scientist. During this time, she supported the residency research program and served as a subject matter expert and co-researcher for several U.S. Department of Defense clinical and injury outcome studies.



*Olden continued to serve as a long-distance mentor, as he worked in New York and later Washington, D.C., where he now heads the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency National Center for Environmental Assessment (<http://www2.epa.gov/aboutepa/kenneth-olden-phd-director-epa-national-center-environmental-assessment>) (Photo courtesy of CUNY)*



*A former NIEHS postdoc herself, Klotz was head of OFCD during the final two years of Ramos' training. "She is a great mentor," Ramos said. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*

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