

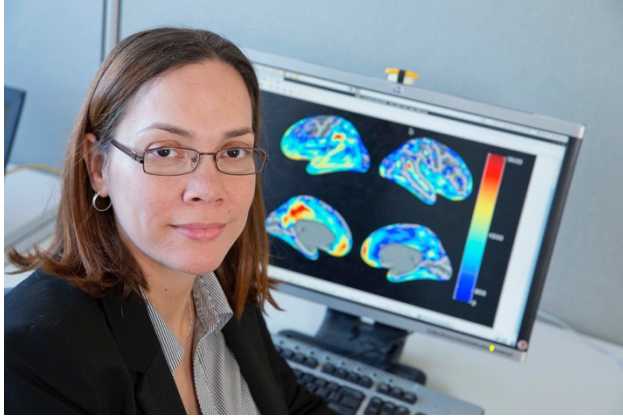
Humans of CDI

Yakeel T. Quiroz, Ph.D.

Paul B. and Sandra M. Edgerley MGH Research Scholar 2020-2025

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Dr. Yakeel Quiroz is Associate Professor in the Departments of Psychiatry and Neurology at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA. She currently serves as Director of the MGH Familial Dementia Neuroimaging Lab, and Multicultural Alzheimer's Prevention Program (MAPP). She completed her PhD in Clinical Psychology at Boston University and her Clinical Internship and Postdoctoral Fellowship in Neuropsychology at the MGH. Dr. Quiroz's research interests focus on studying the neural underpinnings of memory dysfunction in the preclinical stages of Alzheimer's disease (AD). By applying her efforts to the world's largest family with a single, early onset AD-causing mutation (E280A in PSEN1), her research has provided evidence of brain abnormalities in individuals at genetic risk for AD decades before their clinical

onset. Her findings have helped the field to re-conceptualize Alzheimer's as a sequence of changes that begins decades before cognitive decline, and which may be targeted by promising disease-slowing treatments at a time in which they might have their most profound effect. Her research work has resulted in several publications that have generated considerable discussion in the field, and has achieved recognition by colleagues at the regional, national, and international level. Dr. Quiroz is the recipient of several awards, including the NIH Director's Early Independence Award, the FABBS Foundation Early Career Impact Award, the National Academy of Neuropsychology Tony Wong Diversity Award, and the Exact, Physical and Natural Sciences Prize from the Alejandro Angel Escobar Foundation in Colombia.

Dr. Quiroz also serves as Director of the MGH Multicultural Assessment and Research Center (MARC), and the MGH postdoctoral training program in Multicultural Neuropsychology. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time with her family and friends, traveling to new places, and listening to music.

To discover more about the remarkable journey of Dr. Yakeel Quiroz, a trailblazer in neuroscience and a beacon for women's advancement within medicine and science, keep reading.

What impact has receiving the PSDA/CTDA award had on your career and science?

The PSDA award provided support at a time of my career when I needed the most. I was able to collect pilot data I needed to submit my first R01, which it was critical for the success of my research program.

How has CDI impacted your career?

I have had the pleasure of being involved with several programs of the CDI, and it has been great to see the growth and accomplishments of trainees and early career investigators that have benefited from CDI opportunities. I have really enjoyed all my interactions with CDI students, fellows, junior faculty, and staff.

Who are the women who have inspired you? How has this translated into your work?

Women and mothers in science inspire me every single day, especially those from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups. I have been always passionate about supporting women in science, and I have had the privilege of having great women as mentors and role models in my life too. In Colombia, my home country, I had the opportunity for the first time of being a woman peer-mentor to many students. I learned a lot from them. I learned that mentoring is a bi-directional process. Your mentees often know more than they think they do, and approaching the mentorship relationship from the position of a learner will give you the opportunity to listen attentively and learn from what the other one has to offer. When I moved to Boston and enrolled into my graduate programs at Boston University, I had the chance for the first time in my life to work in laboratories led by women. I also had the opportunity to meet two of my life mentors, who are also women. When I joined Harvard Medical School as faculty and Massachusetts General Hospital as director of the Multicultural Alzheimer's Prevention

Program-MAPP, I solidified my commitment to support women and those from minoritized groups. I have built an exceptional clinical and research team formed mostly by multicultural, multilingual and diverse clinicians and researchers, who have made of MAPP one of the few programs in the country that conducts dementia research integrating culturally-informed methods of assessment and biomarker research. I have also founded training programs at MGH to increase the representation of women and individuals from underrepresented groups, including the MAPP summer scholarship, the MAPP Teens program (for high school students from disadvantaged neighborhoods), the multicultural neuropsychology track within the predoctoral clinical psychology internship, and the multicultural neuropsychology postdoctoral fellowship.

What can we all do to advance women of color within medicine and science?

We should support women and diverse trainees as much as we can. Being a Latina neuroscientist myself, I have faced several challenges and I have already overcome barriers that I know many others will likely face. I think that sharing the experience of those who have been successful can help the junior generations be better prepared to succeed. Professional networking has been fundamental for my career and as such, I think help women establish key connections that can help them advance their career. Serving as their sponsor, and constantly advocating for them can be essential; making sure we mention their work when they are not around and that their contributions get the recognition they deserve.

What do you do for fun?

I enjoy spending time with my family and friends, traveling to new places, and listening to music.

What place(s) have you lived in?

Colombia, Cuba, Chile, and the US.