



Juan Gallego, M.D. M.S.

An Interview with ACNP Associate Member, Juan Gallego, M.D., M.S.

Q. Could you tell me a bit about yourself?

A. I was born and raised in Colombia. I came to the US for psychiatry residency and to develop a research career. I am currently a psychiatrist at the Zucker Hillside Hospital and an Assistant Professor at the Zucker School of Medicine at Hofstra/Northwell and I am devoting 80% effort to research and 20% to treatment of first episode psychosis patients. The focus of my work is to study biomarkers of treatment response in first episode schizophrenia. In addition, I recently completed a K23 award on miRNA in CSF in patients with schizophrenia.

Q. When did you become a member of ACNP?

A. I have been an Associate Member for 5 years. Since then, I have served as the chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force (formerly the Minority Task Force), I am currently serving on the Program Committee and have also served on the Education and Training Committee. I also had the opportunity to attend a Latin-American Task Force meeting.

Q. As a member of the ACNP, have you had the opportunity to interact with innovative thought leaders in the field of neuroscience?

A. Yes, I've met several investigators not only in my field of interest but also in non-related fields which helps me inform my research from a unique point of view. For example, I've interacted with Yasmin Hurd as part of our participation in the Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, with Alan Frazer during the Latin-American Task Force meeting, and with several prominent investigators during Program Committee meetings. I've discussed my work with Drs. Carlos Zarate, Carlos Blanco and Maria Oquendo, who are my role models as Hispanic investigators engaged in clinical research. In addition, I have had the opportunity to discuss my work with other prominent researchers in my field such as James Kennedy, Cheryl Corcoran, Yogesh Dwivedi, etc.

Q. How has your membership in the College put you in touch with the professionals who have shaped the field as it currently exists - and will enable you to be one of those who shape the various neuroscientific disciplines in the future?

A. I have benefited from the ACNP meeting by attending wonderful talks and poster sessions, participating in ACNP committees, and networking during specific ACNP activities geared towards junior investigators or just attending social engagements. For example, I started developing an interest in magnetic resonance spectroscopy (MRS) after meeting several key investigators in that field such as Drs. Camilo de la Fuente-Sandoval, Adrienne Lahti, Nina Kraguljac, Lawrence Kegeles and Kristin Cadenhead. As a result, I started collecting my own MRS data.

Moreover, a discussion while presenting my data during a poster session at the meeting prompted me to measure other biomarkers, such as complement C4 levels, in cerebrospinal fluid samples that I had already collected from patients with schizophrenia. This led to a publication in the NPP journal.

Q. The primary functions of the College are research and education. Do you feel the College offers investigators the opportunity for cross-disciplinary communication and the opportunity to promote the application of various neuroscientific disciplines to the study of all forms of mental illness and their treatment? If so, how have these experiences helped your career?

A. Attending scientific talks is a great way for me to get ideas from other disciplines. Poster sessions are also a great way for cross-discipline communication. I particularly like listening to basic neuroscience talks and is very helpful for me to think about how to apply their ideas to my research projects.

Q. Can you offer any suggestions to young investigators?

A. One thing is not to be intimidated. Senior scientists in the College are very open to talk and discuss your work and want to help young investigators. It is important to use social opportunities to relax and talk about science in a more informal setting. Do not be shy! Moreover, the ACNP meeting offers mentoring and a series of sessions, including various round tables, geared towards junior investigators. Please do make use of these opportunities!