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—Warunee Punpanich



She Leaves Her ‘Comfort Zone’ to Train in Fighting HIV

AS A PEDIATRICIAN PRACTICING in one of Thailand’s largest children’s hospitals, **WARUNEE PUNPANICH** reached a point after seeing so many HIV-infected patients that she decided merely treating them wasn’t enough.

Warunee’s facility, Children’s Hospital in Bangkok, has treated more than 1,000 cases of symptomatic HIV-infected children since 1989, with more than 4,000 cases of infants born to HIV-infected mothers. “These children are our future, and the response to the problem indicates how highly we value that future,” she says. “We have to regard every case of HIV infection that is diagnosed in a child as a failure of preventive measures in adults. I decided it was time to step out of my comfort zone and find a more efficient way to deal with this problem.”

Her response was to enroll in the UCLA/Fogarty AIDS International Training and Research Program, based in the School of Public Health. The program, founded and directed by Dr. Roger Detels, provides master’s- and doctoral-level epidemiology training to health professionals in Southeast Asia, China, and other parts of the

world, helping to prepare them to return to leadership positions at their home institutions. At Children’s Hospital in Bangkok, which serves a mostly indigent population, Warunee will be the first physician fully trained in epidemiology.

“We are a very large hospital with lots of data about diseases and patients, but we don’t know how to make use of it,” she explains. “In this age of information overload, my colleagues and I didn’t have the proper skills to critically analyze the data and turn it into knowledge that would help give our children a better quality of life.” Instead, she says, the hospital’s clinicians tend to rely on knowledge gained from Western medical literature, which is not always applicable to their setting. “We have limited resources, so using the most expensive technology is often not an option,” Warunee says. “And the health problems are so much different in my country. Rather than following others, in Thailand we need to learn how to take our own body of knowledge and use that to inform practice. By learning epidemiology, I can do that.”

Warunee is near completion of her doctoral coursework and plans to return to Thailand this summer to complete her dissertation, which will explore factors affecting the quality of life and well being of HIV-

infected children in Thailand. Among other things, she hopes to develop a model for when and how to disclose HIV diagnosis to a child. “A lot of HIV-infected children in Thailand now survive into adolescence, but many are unaware of their own diagnosis,” Warunee says. “It’s very painful for the parents to share this information, but it’s important because as the children get older we need to empower them to take full participation in the treatment process.”

She calls the UCLA School of Public Health program an “eye-opening” experience. “It has provided me with a new level of understanding of the role of the scientific method in generating a valid body of knowledge,” Warunee says. “In the pursuit of this knowledge, and through the network of important contacts I have made here with my colleagues from different countries, I hope to expand my perspective and contribute to making a difference through the application of evidence-based medicine and public health principles.”

Award-Winning Student Seeks to Turn M.P.H. into Difference-Making Role in Health Care Management

ANGELA MARQUEZ WAS AN UNLIKELY PRESENTER at the 3rd International Congress on Immunosuppression Scientific Sessions last December, and not just because Marquez, then a first-year M.P.H. student at the UCLA School of Public Health, is only 26.

The meeting, co-chaired by Drs. Ronald W. Busuttill of UCLA and Peter J. Neuhaus of *University Clinic Charité* in Berlin, is geared toward transplant physicians. Marquez, who presented on a protocol for weaning patients off of a potent immunosuppressant drug after heart transplantation as a way of reducing toxicity to the kidneys, never so much as went to medical school.

But as research coordinator at UCLA's Foundation for Cardiovascular and Transplant Research, she played a leading role in a retrospective study of UCLA heart patients on the renal-sparing protocol – reviewing the charts, gathering the data, and analyzing it under the supervision of the study's principal investigator, Dr. Jon Kobashigawa, medical director of the UCLA Heart Transplant Program. After submitting an abstract, presenting it at the meeting and answering questions from attendees, Marquez learned that she and a co-worker had become the first non-M.D./non-Ph.D.'s to win Young Investigator's Excellence Awards.

"I was truly surprised that I would even be considered," Marquez says. "I feel so grateful for the support and mentorship I have received from Dr. Kobashigawa and the other physicians at the foundation."

Although she majored in history as an undergraduate at UCLA, Marquez was interested in science and health. She joined Chicanos/Latinos for Community Medicine (CCM), and through that organization took part in community health fairs and trips to Mexican border towns to provide basic screenings for conditions such as hypertension and anemia, and to measure blood glucose levels. At one of the group's meetings, the Foundation for Cardiovascular and Transplant Research's executive administrator and a heart transplant recipient spoke about the miracle of life-saving transplantation and the shortage of organ donors. Marquez was so moved by their presentation that, with two other CCM members, she co-founded UCLA Be Carded, an organ donor awareness organization that succeeded in convincing more than 600 people to sign organ donor cards at campus and community events during the two years that Marquez served as co-director.

Marquez also began working at the foundation, continuing as a research assistant after earning her undergraduate degree. When the foundation's research coordinator left in May 2003, Marquez was offered the position; in that role, she oversaw the coordination of a study that led to her award, and co-authored five papers for peer-reviewed journals.

While working at the foundation, Marquez became friends with a co-worker who had a master's degree in public health. "She told me about all of the opportunities available to someone with an M.P.H. and got me really excited about the field," Marquez says. Marquez enrolled at the UCLA School of Public Health with a concentration in health services, her sights set on a management position in the health care industry.

"The transplant patients are amazing," she says. "I have seen some patients in the hospital before their surgery and post-transplantation, and the difference is just breathtaking. I'll miss that aspect, but by playing an integral role in an organization's ability to provide quality health services in an effective and efficient manner, I will be able to reach a lot of people, which I find very appealing. The decisions you make in that position can have far-reaching consequences on access, quality of care and patient satisfaction."



"I was truly surprised that I would even be considered [for the Young Investigator's Excellence Award]. I feel so grateful for the support and mentorship I have received."

—Angela Marquez
(with her supervisor and mentor, Dr. Jon Kobashigawa)

2004-05 student awards

**Abdelmonem A. Afifi
Student Fellowship**
Natalie Drorbaugh
Community Health Sciences

Erin Rogers
Health Services

**Agency for Healthcare
Research and Quality
Award**
Melissa Gatchell
Erin Richardson
Barbara Wentworth
Health Services

**Atlantic Richfield Company
Fellowship Fund**
Perla Atiyah
Myranda Austin
Adam Dost
Hirohito Shimizu
*Environmental Health
Sciences*

Cody Livingston
Forrest Vanderbilt
*Environmental Science
and Engineering Program*

**Biostatistics Training
for AIDS Research**
Erik Bloomquist
Li-Jung Liang
Yan-Jung Liu
Lei Qian
MyungShin Sim

**Fred H. Bixby Doctoral
Fellowship Endowment**
Laura Chyu
Claire Dye
Jennifer Simmons
Community Health Sciences

Astuo Coly
Epidemiology

**Joseph and Celia Blann
Fellowship**
Dallas Swendeman
Community Health Sciences

**California Endowment
Scholarships**
Nathalia Allevato
Shonali Choudhury
Grace Lee
Vanessa Shaw
Community Health Sciences

Kimberly Enard
Raul Sobero
Health Services

**California Wellness
Foundation Scholarships**
Hector Lemus
Miguel Marino
Biostatistics

Gloria Giraldo
Rotrease Regan Yates
Community Health Sciences

Mirna Ponce
Epidemiology

**Chancellor's
Fellowship**
Ning An
Epidemiology

Amy Carroll
Community Health Sciences

Hua Guo
Biostatistics

Jennifer Liebeler
*Environmental Science
and Engineering Program*

Mitsuko Yamamoto
Molecular Toxicology

**Dean's Outstanding
Student Award**
Juan Jia
Biostatistics

Kynna Wright
Community Health Sciences

Judith Olweny
Epidemiology

Eduardo Behrentz, Jr.
*Environmental Science
and Engineering Program*

Ryan Olsen
Health Services

**Dissertation Year
Fellowship**
Hsin-Ju Hsieh
Nan Zhang
Biostatistics

Chi Chiao
Tzu Tsai
Community Health Sciences

Gretchen Coffman
Danny Kim
*Environmental Health
Sciences*

Yan Cui
Katherine Hoggatt
Epidemiology

Angelica Castaneda-
Jimenez
Lisa Sabin
*Environmental Science
and Engineering Program*

**Eleanor J. De Benedictis
Fellowship in Nutrition**
Andrea Conner
Constance Gewa
Community Health Sciences

**Environmental Science
and Engineering Program
Endowment**
Eduardo Behrentz, Jr.
Amy Hensley
Jennifer Liebeler
Cody Livingston
Chad Nelsen
Xueying Wu

**Hortense Fishbaugh
Memorial Fellowships**
Marie Sharp
Epidemiology

**Foley & Lardner
Fellowships
in Health Services**
Joshua Kohrumel
Scott Scrymgeour

**L.S. Goerke
Memorial Fellowship**
Katherine Hoggatt
Epidemiology

**Raymond D. Goodman
Scholarship**
Xin Huang
Biostatistics

Jennifer Erasquin
Community Health Sciences

Margaret Krudysz
*Environmental Health
Sciences*

Ariel Braswell
Health Services

**Graduate Opportunity
Fellowship**
Miguel Marino
Biostatistics

Dahianna Lopez
Donna Padilla
John Tan
Community Health Sciences

Jackie Provost
Biostatistics

**Health Policy and
Management Alumni
Association Scholarship**
Erin Hahn

Gordon Hein
Memorial Scholarship
Christian Shinaberger
Epidemiology

**William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation Environmental
Science and Engineering
Program Trust Fund**
Eduardo Behrentz, Jr.
Maria Echarte
Seong Jeong Lee
Adrienne Katner
Jennifer Liebeler
Chad Nelsen
Gang Qin
Kyonga Yoon

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Endowment Fund**
Amy Hensley
*Environmental Science
and Engineering Program*

Xin Huang
Biostatistics

Kristin Yarris
Community Health Sciences

Sam Lucas Scholarship
Richard Hector
Health Services

**Maternal and Child
Health Grant**
Diana Farid
Rekha Krishnankutty
Community Health Sciences

Nicole Garro
Kyra Samson
Kathryn Smith
Health Services

**Max Factor Family
Foundation
Internship Program**
Katherine Vittes
Community Health Sciences

**Ann G. Quealy Memorial
Fellowship Endowment
in Health Services**
Yelena Gimpleman
Carla Howard

**Ruth F. Richards
Outstanding Student Award**
Joshua Kohrumel
Health Services

Li-Jung Liang
Biostatistics

Aaron Plant
Community Health Sciences

Marie Sharp
Epidemiology

My Lan Tran
*Environmental Health
Sciences*

Eugene Cota Robles
Fellowship
Jade Sasser
Community Health Sciences

**Roemer Health Services
Administration Fellowships**
La Shawnta Bell
Jacqueline Tran
Tracy Yee

**Will Rogers Memorial
Scholarship**
Candace Coffee
Community Health Sciences

Christian Shinaberger
Epidemiology

**Monica Salinas
Internship Fund
in Latino and Latin
American Health**
David Alvarado-
Copenhaver
Luis Sandoval
Community Health Sciences

**Phillip and Adia Siff
Educational Foundation
Scholarship**
Evan King
Community Health Sciences

**Juneal Marie Smith
Fellowship in International
Nutrition**
Constance Gewa
Community Health Sciences

**Wayne Soohoo
Memorial Scholarship**
Gang Liu
Biostatistics

Kristin Yarris
Community Health Sciences

Ning An
Epidemiology

**Samuel J. Tibbitts
Fellowship**
Yasser Aman
Health Services

**Toxic Substance Research
& Teaching Program
Fellowship**
Xioyan Liao
Elizabeth Marshall
*Environmental Health
Sciences*

**Wilshire Foundation
Endowment
in Geriatric Medicine**
Shay Beider
Lourdes Molina
Community Health Sciences