

## 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. Busuttil 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."



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