Dr. Frank Penedo Elected to National Advisory Council on Minority Health Disparities

In the new role, Dr. Penedo will help set national research priorities at the NIH for addressing health disparities.

Frank J. Penedo, Ph.D.

Advocating for health equity and cancer survivorship has always been at the forefront for Frank J. Penedo, Ph.D., associate director for Cancer Survivorship and Translational Behavioral Sciences at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, part of the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. He will now continue his advocacy on a larger scale as part of the National Advisory Council on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NACMHD) — an initiative of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Despite progress in minority health initiatives, there is still pending work to achieve health equity in the U.S. The NACMHD comes into play as a response to these issues, with its members guiding the NIH’s research endeavors. In addition, the council will advise the U.S. secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS), the NIH director and the director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

“Being selected to the NIH Advisory Council is quite an honor,” Dr. Penedo said. “Undoubtedly, this is a critically important position and role as it sets the national research
priorities for addressing health disparities at the NIH.”

A Champion of Change in Minority Health Approaches

The secretary of HHS selects appointees for the council from a pool of individuals across the nation with expertise regarding issues of minority health. Dr. Penedo’s appointment is effective immediately and will last until February 28, 2026. Dr. Penedo has spent the past 23 years tackling minority health issues, making him an ideal candidate to merit his appointment.

His work focuses on understanding marginalized communities, including racial/ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ populations, rural communities and others without equitable care. In these same communities, he has conducted research and training programs to evaluate the role of psychosocial and sociocultural processes in adjustment, health-related quality of life and health outcomes in diverse populations, along with interventions for optimal cancer management.

“There are still many health barriers in these communities – even with access to care,” Dr. Penedo said. “Language, knowledge, cultural perceptions, etc., persist and continue to obstruct every aspect of the health care continuum, from primary to tertiary prevention. I look forward to providing guidance on implementing the necessary research infrastructure to characterize how potentially modifiable factors may be targeted to mitigate the elevated risk seen in these communities.”
Research Efforts in Minorities and Cancer Survivorship

Dr. Penedo’s work at Sylvester and the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine involves leading several projects of high relevance to the council’s mission. He is currently the principal investigator for a Hispanic community health study and is leading research in unmet supportive care needs for cancer survivors. In addition, Dr. Penedo is the contact principal investigator for a study funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to examine social, cultural, behavioral and medical influences on adjustment to cancer survivorship in Hispanic patients.

As a prior and current principal investigator of multiple NCI and other NIH studies, Dr. Penedo has developed considerable experience in cancer control and survivorship. His focus on the delivery of psychosocial interventions, care delivery and health services research are all great strides in optimizing health outcomes in diverse cancer survivors.

“I hope to have the opportunity to contribute my expertise by guiding research priorities and ultimately eliminate health disparities in the U.S.,” Dr. Penedo said. “I am also thrilled to interact with an exceptional group of scientists as we move forward to achieve health equity in our communities.”

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