

Three Female Physician-Scientists Honored with 2021 Batchelor Awards for Excellence in Children's Health Research

George E. Batchelor was an entrepreneur and philanthropist with a passion for improving children's health and health care. He made a \$10 million gift in 2001 that led to the dedication of the Batchelor Children's Research Institute at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine.



From left, Batchelor Award recipients Dainelys Garcia, Ph.D., Karen C. Young, M.D., M.S., and Chryso Pefkaros Katsoufis, M.D.

It was at that original dedication ceremony that he made a surprise announcement of an additional \$5 million gift to establish the annual Micah Batchelor Award for Excellence in Children's Health Research in memory of his late grandson. In 2014, the Batchelor Foundation committed another \$5 million to create the Micah Batchelor Fellow Award for Excellence in Children's Health Research to encourage young investigators in their careers.

The awards are presented annually to highly deserving physician-scientists who are conducting cutting-edge research in children's diseases. This year, for the first time, awards were presented to three outstanding female physician-scientists, each working to give new hope to families facing childhood illnesses.

Karen C. Young, M.D., M.S., received the Micah Batchelor Award, and Dainelys Garcia, Ph.D., and Chryso Pefkaros Katsoufis, M.D, each received the Micah Batchelor Fellows Award.

"These awards allow for talented physician-scientists to pursue research that will lead to new insights and innovative therapies," said Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A. dean and chief academic officer of the Miller School of Medicine. "This groundbreaking work makes a critical difference in the lives of the infants and children who depend on us."

An Inspirational Quote

Glen Flores, M.D., chair of the Department of Pediatrics at the Miller School, and the George E. Batchelor Chair in Child Health, opened the ceremony on December 7 at the Batchelor

Children's Research Institute by reading a famous quote from Marie Curie that describes the beauty and power of a woman in a laboratory.

He followed the quote by saying, "The fact that all of our 2021 award recipients are women has not gone unnoticed. It shows precisely how far medicine has come and gives us great promise for the future."

The event was attended by family, friends, colleagues, UM leadership, and former recipients of the award, both virtually and in person. The celebration also recognized the enormous and ongoing generosity of The Batchelor Foundation, which continues to be one of the largest donors to the Miller School.

"We cannot thank The Batchelor Foundation enough for their incredible philanthropy, because it is endowments like these that allow our researchers to continually pursue new breakthroughs in pediatric diseases," said University of Miami President Julio Frenk, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D. "It also ensures that our University will have the resources to grow and thrive as we move toward our centennial in 2025, and for generations to follow."

Dr. Young is a neonatologist and associate professor of pediatrics at the Miller School, and associate director of the Neonatal Fellowship Program at the Holtz Children's Hospital. Her research is focused on understanding the molecular and cellular mechanisms that contribute to endothelial dysfunction in preterm infants with bronchopulmonary dysplasia and pulmonary hypertension.

Gaining Critical Insight



From left, Henri R. Ford, M.D., M.H.A., Chryso Pefkaros Katsoufis, M.D., Dainelys Garcia, Ph.D., Julio Frenk, M.D., M.P.H., Ph.D., Karen C. Young, M.D., Glen Flores, M.D., Jon Batchelor and Nancy Batchelor.

“This award will allow us to gain critical insight into the molecular pathways that are altered in the lungs of preterm infants born to pregnancies complicated by preeclampsia,” said Dr. Young. “Preeclampsia disproportionately affects African American women and one in five preterm births is secondary to preeclampsia. Exciting preliminary data from our laboratory have revealed that extracellular vesicles shed from the placentas of preterm infants exposed to preeclampsia enter the fetal circulation. These extracellular vesicles contain a cargo of proteins and nucleotides that accelerate aging of the preterm pulmonary vasculature, leading to chronic lung disease of prematurity and pulmonary hypertension. On completion of

this research, we will be able to identify new targets to improve cardiopulmonary outcomes of preterm infants.”

Dr. Garcia is a child psychologist at the Mailman Center for Child Development at the Miller School where she is assistant professor of clinical pediatrics. She has experience providing clinical services to young children from diverse backgrounds and collaborating with community partners to improve access to care.

“This award is carving the foundation for a line of research that I have been trying to establish for more than five years,” Dr. Garcia said. “The goal is to improve outcomes for kids who have had head injuries but are not receiving the care that they need to have a positive long-term outcome.”

Dr. Katsoufis is a pediatric nephrologist and associate professor of clinical pediatrics at the Miller School, as well as medical director of the pediatric dialysis unit at Holtz Children’s Hospital. Currently, her clinical research is focused on congenital anomalies of the kidney and urinary tract as they relate to the developmental origins of adult disease.

“Part of what brings us all together here is believing in the potential of children and our commitment to that,” Dr. Katsoufis said. “My goal is to bring a more clear and hopeful sense of the future to those children at greater risk of kidney disease.”

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