HOW DO THE COLOMBIAN HEALTH SYSTEM BETTER MAKE A MORE CULTURALLY COMPETENT EXTENSION OF PRIMARY HEALTHCARE SERVICES INTO INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES IN COLOMBIA? [1]

Puerto, Hugo. How do the Colombian health system better make a more culturally competent extension of primary healthcare services into indigenous communities in Colombia? 2018

Adviser: James T. Pfeiffer [2]

Literature and evidence shows that indigenous contributions to national health systems are often limited, and despite this, indigenous communities are resilient. Advocacy efforts by historically marginalized indigenous groups in Colombia have long been used to protect community-based ancestral health practices. In response to recent tensions with the government, Indigenous people are mobilizing around ways to maintain and develop their own medical expertise and practices. This project explores barriers and facilitators to implementing a national indigenous health system (known by its Spanish acronym, SISPI) by the indigenous people of Colombia and how this system speaks to the Colombian general health system in search for adequate health care access. My basic research question is: how do the Colombian health system better make a more culturally competent extension of primary healthcare services into indigenous communities in Colombia?

I am applying for the Pre-Dissertation Research Pilot Funds Competition to travel to Colombia between June-August 2018. I will be conducting preliminary data collection to support ongoing collaborative efforts by the local NGO, Sinergias, the Ministry of Health (MOH) and national indigenous organizations, in order to support the integral development of Colombian society through health, promoting public policies and strengthening technical and administrative capacities at the national, regional and local levels. I first aim to develop a network of indigenous leaders and government officials that strategize on tangible ways of developing a system in which “Western” [1] and indigenous health practices can coexist and that is creating a cultural shift in Colombian public health. This cultural shift could potentially change the ways in which indigenous practices are considered, implemented, and valued, as an integral component to the overall functioning health system of Colombia to improve population health for all its citizens. The second objective is to work with Sinergias and the MOH to assess the major health problems indigenous communities are facing and explore alternatives to bridging “Western” and “traditional” medicine in an effort to improve health indicators such as, child and maternal mortality, mental health, nutrition, chronic and infectious diseases, and socio-economic determinants, in these communities.

People Involved: Hugo Puerto [3]

Status of Research or Work: In progress

