

NIH NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE



Valeria A. Gerena González

Postbaccalaureate
CCR Bethesda



Education

B.S., Molecular Cellular Biology, Medical Humanities and Health Minor, University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras Campus

Scientific Interests

Neurologic system and cancer

I applied to iCURE because...

I applied to iCURE because this program is centered in my research of interest, which is cancer. As well, I wanted to have more experience in the research field and see myself in a prestigious research enterprise to experience hands-on the daily life of a scientist and explore this as a career option.

My favorite traditions/holidays...

My favorite cultural tradition is Thanksgiving because it is not only an opportunity for family to gather, reflect, and be thankful of where we are at today, but also because in my country of Puerto Rico, Thanksgiving is the beginning of the Christmas celebration, which fuels our heart and soul. It recharges us to continue being resilient, even through the adversities we might be facing. Fun fact: Puerto Rico has the longest Christmas celebration in the world—from Thanksgiving until around the end of Jan.!

My hometown is...

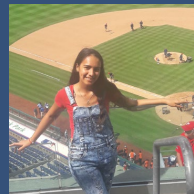
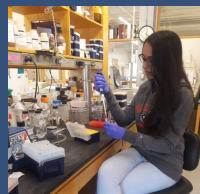
I was born in Bayamón, Puerto Rico, and I grew up in Dorado, Puerto Rico.

In my spare time, I enjoy...

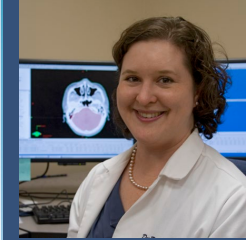
- I love dancing; I trained in dance for 18 years of my life.
- I love traveling and exploring the cities' hidden gems.
- I love trying new foods.
- I love going to the theater and enjoy a good musical and/or a theater play.

A few of my favorite things...

- Favorite food: Puerto Rican Christmas food: rice with pigeon's peas ("Arroz con Gandules"), pasteles of plantains or yucca, potato salad, green banana salad ("guineos en escabeche"), and coquito
- Favorite getaway: the beach
- Baseball fun



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DeeDee K. Smart, MD, PhD

Investigator
Radiation Oncology Branch
CCR Bethesda



Words to live by...

*"You must do the thing that you think you cannot do." —Eleanor Roosevelt
(and sometimes when I have a really bad day or things don't go the way I expected...)*

"If you ain't wreckin', you ain't racin'!" —Dale Earnhardt

What is your favorite thing about working at NCI?

The infinite possibilities that are available!! It's like working in a scientific candy store—your mind can just wonder forever, so much so that you have to learn to restrain yourself if you actually want to get anything done.

In my spare time, I enjoy...

I love to cook for other people—especially my family recipes from the Georgia/South Carolina Low Country. (Coca-cola cake and shrimp and grits, anyone?). I also love to watch and play rugby, and I have a passion for my rescued Siberian Huskies that rule my life.

My favorite traditions/holidays...

THANKSGIVING—it embodies a spirit of pausing to celebrate gratitude and to be grateful for the people you love—needed now more than ever.

