

Science Spotlight: Puerto Rican researching malaria in Ghana ^[1]

Submitted by [Ariadna S. Rubio Lebrón](#) ^[2] on 8 February 2024 - 12:15pm



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It was not until she was 17 years old, when she participated in a nanotechnology camp at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), that Ana Vázquez Pagán considered becoming a scientist (Elikplim Dokpli).

Ana Vázquez Pagán has been in the African country since last year on a scholarship for people interested in global health.

Scientist Ana Vázquez Pagán was in eighth grade when she lost a close family member who was pregnant during the 2009 influenza A (H1N1) or swine flu pandemic. The event scarred her, and that death planted a question in her mind: "How could this have happened?"

At the time, Vázquez Pagán did not plan to pursue a career as a researcher. It wasn't until she was 17, when she participated in a nanotechnology camp at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), that she considered becoming a scientist.

Over the years, that question remained with her.

Her experience during that pandemic motivated her to complete a doctorate at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in Tennessee, where she studied the development of influenza in obese and pregnant people.

Today, Vázquez Pagán's interest in working with vulnerable populations has taken her to Ghana through the global health program funded by the Fogarty International Center of the National Institutes of Health. There, she studies malaria in pregnant women and infants.

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