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Investigator Profile

Say hello to Darielys Mejias Morales, an extraordinary biotechnologist. Darielys grew up in Puerto Rico and came to us a few months ago to help manage the OBBL. We surprised her down in the lab with a full camera crew, and we bring you the following interview transcript:

What brought you to the OBBL?
I chose the OBBL for several reasons. First, I want to develop my skills and knowledge about the engineering field before committing myself to graduate school. Second, this is the only laboratory at UNM that is involved in both bioengineering and the clinical aspect of the medical sciences. In addition, I have always shown interest in orthopaedics, and I had a few experiences in Puerto Rico related to this field. During this year, I’ll be working as a research technician, working in several research projects and also performing some managerial tasks.

Have your experiences in Puerto Rico shaped the way you conduct research here?
I believe that as a biotechnologist, I can contribute to the OBBL with my biomedical background. In Puerto Rico, hard work and cost-effectiveness is strongly emphasized. I learned to give my best in everything I do, and to be willing to take new challenges without hesitation. Those characteristics allow me to be grateful of the multiple resources we have here and to be confident that I am not going to fail.

What are the next steps in your career?
I am pursuing a dual degree as a medical doctor and a biomedical engineer. I just applied to the UNM MD/PhD program for the 2018 entering class. I am currently part of the NIH PREP scholars at UNM. This is a post-baccalaureate program, in which I have the opportunity for a year in a research laboratory related to the biomedical sciences.

Darieyls, thanks for sharing your experiences and thoughts. We are excited to have you here—in all your biotechnologist and doctor-in-training glory!

Before the 1930s pregnancy tests were based on budding scientific theories and were unfortunately rather unreliable. The discovery of hCG in the urine of pregnant women in 1925 helped change our understanding. Through research, it was found that injecting sexually premature rabbits, frogs, toads, and rats with hCG would cause them to ovulate. The first pregnancy test using this marker, known as the ‘Friedman’ or ‘rabbit’ test, involved taking urine samples and injecting them into rabbits (and sometimes frogs, rats, or toads). After a couple of days, the rabbits were killed and their ovaries inspected to determine whether the result was positive or negative. There was a common misconception at the time that the rabbit only died in a positive test, which led to the slang phrase “the rabbit has died” to state that a woman was pregnant. The test was expensive and unfortunately not very accurate if hCG levels in the urine were too low—but fortunately was replaced through advancements in research!

Source: https://goo.gl/5YVhPY  Source: https://goo.gl/MmYF9P