What is National Hispanic Heritage Month?

National Hispanic Heritage month celebrates the contributions of Americans with Hispanic descent. It is celebrated from September 15th to October 15th, during which many Hispanic countries celebrate their independence day.

Frida Kahlo

Frida Kahlo is a Mexican artist best known for her use of emotion and bold colors in her artwork. She is a polio survivor and as a teenager sustained critical injuries that left her in a body cast. During her recovery, she began to focus on painting. Of her 143 paintings, 55 are self portraits. In her painting, The Broken Column, she portrays both her physical journey to recovery and her spiritual one.
Although this story from NBC News (circa 2014) may be a bit dated, the article and accompanying video spotlight on the bustling Latinx population found right here in Durham. Through food, business, and nonprofit work, Hispanic roots are being laid throughout the Bull City and its surrounding communities.

Here’s a list of some great Latinx-owned restaurants to check out. Research other Latinx-owned businesses and organizations near you as well, like grocery stores, book stores, and nonprofits in search of volunteers. Give them your support year-round, not just during Hispanic Heritage Month, as these people and places are vital pieces to our vibrant, diverse community.

Minority groups in America have been hit especially hard by the pandemic, and the Latinx population is no exception. Here in North Carolina, Hispanic residents make up 21% of positive COVID-19 cases, yet they only represent 9% of our state population. Language barriers, lack of insurance, and overall mistrust in the American healthcare system has fed into this staggering disparity. Innovative solutions are essential to solving these complex health injustices, and that is just what LATIN-19 is looking to do.

Composed of Latinx health professionals across North Carolina, LATIN-19 is an interdisciplinary advocacy and outreach group working to highlight the Latinx community in coronavirus policy decisions. Meeting weekly on Zoom since the beginning of the pandemic, community leaders and other residents share their stories and concerns. The LATIN-19 team will then coagulate these issues into concrete action plans, including workplace policy demands, increased testing in Hispanic neighborhoods, and Spanish informational guides. This grassroots effort is now focused on providing vaccinations to Latinx individuals in areas with low health access.

LATIN-19 has created the groundwork to sow trust within this historically mistreated health demographic; it is now up to us to sustain this trust and provide equitable treatment even after the pandemic.
Since the colonial times of America, North Carolina has been famous (or infamous?) for its production of tobacco. The Tar Heel State’s long, humid growing season allowed for this ‘cash crop’ to flourish, and when it was time to harvest, many of these leaves were brought to the nearby city of Durham, where they dried and processed them into cigarettes. On paper, this vertically integrated agricultural scheme appeared to be a robust and prosperous economy for North Carolina. In actuality, thousands, if not millions, of workers suffered day in and day out without recognition or reward to garner this statewide reputation. The sweaty, bug-infested work in the fields was grueling, and yet the work in the processing plants may have been just as miserable; long, low-wage shifts in toxic labor conditions were fielded by poor African-Americans who were segregated from receiving better jobs in Durham.

Fast forward to 2021, and many of those tobacco plants are now closed in Durham, outsourced to other countries and replaced by studio apartments or kitschy breweries. Yet the growth of tobacco still takes place right here in this state, and, unfortunately, many of the working conditions haven’t changed. Like other large-scale agricultural plants across the country, the tobacco labor force is dominated by Latin American immigrants, the majority of which are H-2A workers. And similar to these agricultural plants, the work is brutal, unsafe, and for very little compensation. Yet unlike the field work in states like California and Florida, tobacco harvesting carries along the hazard of nicotine poisoning.

In an investigative article written in August of 2021, Da Yeon Eom details the struggles of North Carolina’s tobacco H-2A workers, which are foreign workers granted temporary visas for agricultural labor. Workers are often getting sick due to the absorption of both nicotine and pesticides, creating a myriad of health problems. Because of this group’s vulnerability and lack of representation, this public health crisis is seldom reported. As we enter Hispanic Heritage Month in America, consider how these workers are risking their own health to create a better life for their offspring and future generations. Also consider the countless lives lost due to the mistreatment of tobacco workers and how this mistreatment is now ingrained in the health disparities seen in our Latinx communities.
A commonly heard concept in PT school centers around the word ‘salience’. Defined as the idea of being noticeable or prominent, it is imperative that our patients feel a sense of salience in their rehab program so that they themselves feel in control of their recovery. Therapists can provide salience to the patient for increased buy-in via an effective interview, continuous monitoring, and adaptability. But what if these are not achieved? Patient salience is diminished, rehab goals may not be met, and outcomes may be poorer. This is exactly the case when a language barrier exists between the clinician and the client.

Spanish speakers make up about 13% of the country’s population (42 million people) and this number is only expected to climb in the coming decades. It is highly probable that all of us, at some point in our career, will encounter a Spanish-speaking patient with minimal or no English vocabulary. Then what? The first (and correct) option is to seek an interpreter. Under the Affordable Care Act, interpreters must be provided to any patient with low English proficiency if that health care facility has received any federal funding. However, interpreters at large health care systems have scheduling inconsistencies for a plethora of reasons.

Thus, many therapists resort to other options, including enlisting a relative of the patient or going without translation at all, leading to poorer health outcomes downstream (Mirza et al., 2020). Although the use of an interpreter is a tried-and-true remediation for the deleterious health effects of a language barrier, more can be done to ensure patient salience. One paper from 1996 provides tangible solutions to this problem. Feist (1996) tackles the barrier of rehab at home for patients with low English proficiency. Home exercise programs are almost always written and detailed in English. By creating exercise prescriptions in the patient’s native tongue, the patient will require less communication assistance and be able to continue their recovery outside of the clinic more independently. Written forms in the patient’s language can also be used in an evaluation. Instead of frustrating minutes spent employing hand gestures and simple phrases to understand what activities cause their patient pain, a yes/no checklist of various statements can deliver the message quicker and more clearly.

This evaluation checklist is not foolproof, as it does not grant the patient the ability to elaborate on specific details, but can provide a quick synopsis of their condition to the therapist that bypasses the language blockade. Feist also proposes the use of audiotapes for home exercise prescriptions as well. 25 years ago, this must have been a novel and creative idea. Flash forward to 2021, and we have an abundance of technology at our disposal that could achieve this same goal. Audio clips in the form of .mp3’s could be uploaded to electronic records. Video or audio files can be sent via text to the patient’s phone. Spanish exercise and rehab videos could be uploaded and shared on YouTube. There is no shortage of avenues of virtual communication that can deliver our therapeutic messages to our non-English-speaking patients. It is up to us to seek out these avenues and utilize them in the patient’s best interest, increasing their salience and narrowing health disparities in our communities.
Diversity in healthcare is an ongoing struggle to align our country’s racial and ethnic demographics with our workforce. The push to incorporate more diversity in physical therapy has ramped up in the past decade, yet the numbers still do not reflect that. In the APTA’s Workforce Analysis from December of 2020, they report that “Black and Hispanic/Latino PTs and PTAs are underrepresented in the physical therapy profession, compared with the general population based on U.S. Census data.” According to data from Data USA in 2018, only 5.3% of physical therapists are Hispanic/Latinx, and as of 2019, only 3.5% of APTA members are Hispanic/Latinx. Compared to the nation’s 18.4% Latinx population, this disparity is stark and deserves attention.

To address this need, the profession of physical therapy as well as educational programs should:
1. Increase their efforts in recruitment of Hispanic students through clinical pipeline and mentorship initiatives
2. Incorporate themselves more into Hispanic communities

The lack of LatinX representation in physical therapy is a nuanced issue that will not be solved by the proposed recommendations alone. By starting conversations and addressing this issue head-on, we will take the first step towards implementing real change within our physical therapy profession to best serve the Latinx population.

### Race & Ethnicity of Physical Therapists

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<td>Other</td>
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*APTA data based on membership population.

### Helpful Articles on APTA:

- Resources on Language Differences
- Serving Patients With Limited English Proficiency
**Cesar Chavez**

Cesar Chavez was an influential organizer, activist, and leader in the Latinx community in America in the mid-20th century. Chavez's family hails from Mexico, but planted roots in Yuma, Arizona generations before Chavez was born. At an early age, Chavez's family moved to San Jose, California, where his legacy still lies. From an early age, Cesar was interested in fighting for workers' rights, specifically immigrant workers. In 1962, he turned that interest into a life mission; with the founding of the United Farm Workers (UFW), Chavez became a leading figure for this underrepresented population.

Throughout the next three decades, UFW enlisted tens of thousands of migrant workers into unions, creating a unified voice for increased wages and safer working conditions. The success of UFW can be attributed to Cesar Chavez's intense passion for the cause - he often performed fasts and organized strikes to gain the attention of business owners and politicians alike. Chavez is deserving of all of the praise he receives; an activist fighting for civil rights, the working class, and ensuring the pursuit of the American Dream for countless Latinx immigrants.

**Dolores Huerta**

Leading alongside and in conjunction with Cesar Chavez was Dolores Huerta, another important figure in the fight for Latinx representation in this country. Born in northern New Mexico, Huerta also made the pilgrimage to California, settling down in the Stockton area. Her first organizing job was with the Stockton Community Service Organization (CSO), where she orchestrated voter registration drives, lobbied local politicians for neighborhood improvements, and created the Agricultural Workers Association. The CEO of the organization at this time was Cesar Chavez, who took notice of Huerta's hard work and formed an impactful partnership with her. Chavez and Huerta left CSO at the same time and founded the National Farm Workers Association in 1962, the predecessor to UFW. Huerta was the main legislative advocate and spokesperson for this organization at the time. She then left UFW to create her own organization, titled La Union del Pueblo Entero (LUPE). Huerta's legacy lives on through the tireless work of LUPE and the Dolores Huerta Foundation, empowering women and Latinx individuals across the nation.

**Ellen Ochoa**

Ellen Ochoa is a physicist and community leader that was the first Hispanic American woman to fly in space. A native of Los Angeles, California, Ochoa received degrees from San Diego State University and Stanford University. By 1991, NASA was impressed with Dr. Ochoa's research, and tapped her to become a part of the space crew. As a mission specialist and engineer, Ochoa traversed to space on four separate occasions, logging over 900 hours of time off of planet Earth. As private companies begin to launch civilians into space as well, let's not forget the important scientific milestones laid down by physicists like Ellen Ochoa, and how their work paved the way for us to conquer this frontier in the near future.
Champions of Diversity

AOC
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is the Congresswomen for the 14th district of NY in the Bronx and Queens, one of the most diverse and fast-growing districts in the nation. As a Bronxite of Puerto-Rican descent, she grew up acutely aware of the differences that a zip code could make on the types of opportunities its residents were afforded. She went on to attend Boston University and received a degree in Economics and International Relations.

She was inspired by her time working in the office of the late Senator Kennedy to work on empowering the Latinx community. She gained a lot of valuable campaigning experience through her time in the Bernie Sanders campaign. Her personal experiences with working class issues also influenced her commitment to social issues. Her grassroots campaign came out victorious, when in 2018, AOC became the youngest woman elected to Congress.

Gina Torres
Award-winning actress Gina Torres is a Hollywood ambassador for the intersectionality of African and Latinx heritages. Born to Cuban-American parents, Torres proudly wears her Afro-Latina culture on her sleeve.

She has gained popularity from starring in such shows as Firefly and Suits, even attending fellow Suits co-star Meghan Markle's royal wedding. She has also appeared in the Emmy-winning TV series Westworld.

Gina Torres is currently producing and starring in a Suits spin-off show called Pearson, placing a spotlight on Afro-Latinidad excellence on primetime cable television.

Maritza Correia
Born to Guayenese parents in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Maritza Correia is the first Puerto Rican of African descent to be a member of the U.S. Olympic Swimming team. After being diagnosed with scoliosis at the age of six, swimming was a recommended form of exercise to correct her spinal curvature. What started as a therapeutic modality turned into a lifelong passion for Correia.

She went on to swim at the University of Georgia, where she gained 27 All-American awards and 11 NCAA championship events. Correia competed in the 2004 Olympic Games, serving as a member of the 4x400 relay team. Unfortunately, her professional swimming career was cut short due to shoulder injuries in 2008, and was unable to compete in any further Olympics. While working in marketing for outfitter OshKosh, Correia is also a spokeswoman for Swim1922, an organization that teaches African-Americans of all ages better swim techniques and basic water skills.
Yalitza Aparicio is a Mexican-born actress and global spokeswoman. She gained worldwide popularity for her performance in her first-ever acting role in 2018’s Roma. Aparicio became the first person of indigenous American heritage to earn an Oscar nomination for an acting role, and only the second Mexican to earn this prestigious nomination.

Born in Oaxaca, Aparicio has no formal acting training; in fact, she was months away from beginning her first preschool teaching job when she was casted to star in Roma. With unbounding grace, dignity, and excellence, Yalitza Aparicio is an icon for indigenous Mexicans, and is deserving of her title as the UNESCO Global Ambassador for Indigenous People.

Did You Know?

Spanish is a gendered language which can hinder attempts to be more gender inclusive. Although the term Latinx has gained a lot of popularity in the US, it does not follow the rules of the language - it is an anglicization of the word Latino/a. Using the “e”, like in “Latine” and “elle”, is more naturally implemented into the language. There is still a lot of debate over which term is best to use; however, understanding why each term exists can be important to gain insight on why someone chooses to identify one way or another. More information about the use of Latine/Latinx can be found here.

Sonia Sotomayor

Sonia Sotomayor is the first Hispanic and the third woman to serve on the Supreme Court of the United States. A native of the Bronx, NY, Sotomayor’s parents hail from Puerto Rico. After becoming valedictorian at her high school, Sotomayor attended Princeton University with the goal of becoming an attorney front and center on her mind.

Her first legal job was in the district attorney’s office of Manhattan, where, even at her young age, gained praise for being a hard-nosed yet fair lawyer. After leaving the DA’s office and following her stint in private practice, Sotomayor was appointed to the United States District Court in New York in 1991. Her diligent work paid off almost two decades later, when Barack Obama nominated her to the U.S. Supreme Court in 2009. Sotomayor broke barriers as a Latinx woman and continues to work tirelessly for affirmative action and same sex marriage policies in the highest court of the United States.
The most obvious time I’ve been welcomed into the Hispanic community was when I lived with a host family in Spain. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience being immersed in the traditional culture of Southern Spain and living with my temporary family. I’ve always felt people bond over food best, something exemplified by our daily evenings at the dinner table with meals made by my host dad. We not only exclusively spoke Spanish, but shared thoughts about family, politics, and values from both cultures. I am beyond grateful for the time spent with my familia de Sevilla and look forward to going back one day to catch up.

ANONYMOUS

I am glad to be surrounded by wonderful, loving people at Duke DPT. I have been able to find community among classmates who share similar experiences. This month I am excited to celebrate my latinidad/hispanidad, something that was not always easy to do growing up in environments that called for assimilation over celebration. I am happy to represent my people and my family in this profession, and hope that others can see themselves in this place as well and know that they too belong here.

NANCY RODRIGUEZ, DPT ’23

ANONYMOUS

Understanding and being able to speak Spanish as it relates to health care - especially in physical therapy - can be so beneficial to the provider-patient relationship. It is imperative that we provide the best care and services for any patient; and when that patient’s second language is English, being able to effectively communicate is part of that care. Unfortunately, we cannot always rely on translating services, and even just being able to explain to a patient why we need to reschedule the appointment (to wait for said translator) can improve relationships. I am taking Medical Spanish this Fall to be able to lessen any patient fear or uncertainty that comes from my inability to communicate. I want to improve patient comfort and grow my own knowledge so I can be the best provider to Spanish-speaking patients. There is a large Spanish-speaking population in North Carolina and across the United States, and I feel that it is our duty as health care providers to be accessible for and supportive of all who comes into our care.

MEREDITH STUTZ, DPT ’23

Many of my peers have yet to meet someone in this profession that identifies as Hispanic/Latinx. I have not seen very many in teaching roles or in leadership roles during my observation hours or within my education. Although we may expect an increase in the future, I wonder what my role is now in helping move that forward as I prepare to enter the field.

ANONYMOUS
Books

- *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter* by Erika Sanchez
- *Chicano!* by Richard Vasquez
- *El Norte: The Epic and Forgotten Story of Hispanic North America* by Carrie Gibson

Movies/Shows

- *Roma*
- *Bajo La Misma Luna (Under the Same Moon)*

Broaden your feed: Instagram

- @latinxtherapy
- @thearfolatinadiaspora
- @fiercebymitu
DPT DIVERSITY CLUB AND OTD PROGRAM WOULD LIKE TO INVITE YOU TO:

Hispanic & Latine PT/OT panel
BUILDING COMMUNITIES

Wednesday Oct. 6
6:30 pm
Zoom ID: 933 8313 9415

Come listen to OTs and PTs of Hispanic and Latine backgrounds tell their stories about how they have created a sense of community within the OT and PT professions.

Speakers:
- Michelle Ramirez, PT, DPT, OCS
- Daniella Ortiz, PT, DPT
- Emily Negrón, OTR/L
- Diana Marquez, PT, DPT, ATC, LAT
- Daisy Delgado, COTA/L
- Amanda D. Cadena, OTR/L