



CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

In South Florida, Female Infectious Disease Experts Provide Crucial Leadership During Pandemic

By **Nathalia Ortiz** • Published August 29, 2020 • Updated on August 29, 2020 at 8:53 am



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Many of the experts we see guiding us through the COVID-19 pandemic in the nation and around the world are men, but in South Florida it's women who are the most recognizable faces helping us understand the coronavirus.

"It's a huge responsibility because being in the spotlight, about something that is absolutely serious, and a problem that all of us need to solve, requires that I be extremely careful," said Dr. Aileen Marty.

Dr. Marty, a renowned infectious disease physician and professor at Florida International University, has been interviewed countless times by local and national media outlets. She also consults for Miami-Dade county's Mayor; is a retired Navy captain, former UN Weapons

Inspector and a public speaker, but her long list of accomplishments did not come without naysayers.

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“When I told individuals that I wanted to go to medical school, sometimes people would laugh and say, ‘oh, you can’t do that, you’re a female,” says Dr. Marty.

Another well-respected infectious disease specialist in South Florida is Doctor María Luisa Alcaide, who works at the University of Miami.

“We have a lot of women in the field, we have a lot of women in medical school. What we haven’t achieved yet is a lot of women in leadership,” points out Dr. Alcaide.

Alcaide is the Director of the Research Unit for Infectious Diseases at the Miller School of Medicine. She’s traveled to sub-saharan Africa and South America doing work related to HIV. She pointed out that in this era of COVID-19, many of the people on the front lines are women.

“In the hospitals, most of the nurses are women. And I think it’s more challenging for women because they have many other competing responsibilities,” said Dr. Alcaide.

Dr. Dadilia Garcés an epidemiologist who teaches at Miami-Dade college says her branch of medicine and public health, in general, is also mostly led by men, which means the community misses out.

“We are more nurturing as women and we try to take care and to see the vision more as a global, more as a caring perspective... and that helps a lot when you work in healthcare, but also when you’re a leader,” said Dr. Garcés.

Her accomplishments include holding the position of National Epidemiologist for the UN in Trinidad and Tobago, and a dual degree in special education. Dr. Garcés’ current passion is to teach and through that role she wants to debunk common misconceptions.

“One stigma is that mathematics is boring and mathematics is not for girls. And science neither. And that is not true. They can do it, and S.T.E.M in general, have been the careers, that during this pandemic, has been steady and people still have jobs,” said Dr. Garcés.

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