



Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is the Dean and a Professor at the University of Texas, El Paso School of Nursing. He is the first Hispanic male in the United States to receive a PhD in Nursing and has spent most of his career working with “at risk” women and their families. He is an experienced neonatal and pediatric nurse practitioner providing primary care and developmental assessments for infants, children, and adolescents with exposure to HIV and drugs. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is a pioneer in creating innovative nursing approaches (home intervention) for mothers with substance use disorders and their children. Over the past 15 years he has been a researcher in communities of color where health disparities abound. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is currently a Fellow with the Robert Wood Johnson Nurse Executive Program. His leadership experience includes being the former President for the Academy of Nurse Practitioners; Director of the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner program at the University of Texas-Houston and University of Maryland-Baltimore; Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of Miami, former Dean of University of Texas El Paso nursing school and is presently the Dean of the University of Colorado College of Nursing

### **Interview Abstract**

Dr. Provencio-Vasquez began his education with an Associate Degree in Mental Health in 1975 and in 1978 moved on to an Associate Degree in Nursing. He continued with his education and completed in Nurse Practitioner Certificate in 1983 and his PhD in Nursing Research in 1992. In 2001 he received his Post Graduate Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is an experienced nurse educator, eminent researcher, and proven administrator with more than 40 years of health care experience. He served as a clinical nurse, nurse researcher, nurse educator, school administrator and pediatric neonatal nurse practitioner. He is the former dean of the nursing school at the University of Texas-El Paso and presently is the new dean of the University of Colorado College of Nursing at the Anschutz Medical Campus.

Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is a first- generation college graduate of Mexican immigrants and is the first Latino male to earn a doctorate in nursing and head a nursing school in the United States. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is currently a Fellow with the Robert Wood Johnson Nurse Executive Program.

## **Biographical Sketch**

Dr. Provencio-Vasquez began his career as a staff nurse in the Emergency Department of the Good Samaritan medical Center in Phoenix Arizona. He also began teaching at the Maricopa Technical College in Phoenix as a clinical instructor for Maternal Child nursing. He moved to a Neonatal Nurse Practitioner and Research Associate in 1990 at the California Pacific Medical Center in San Francisco. He became an Associate Professor at the University of Texas Houston Health Science Center and School of Nursing in 1993. He has remained in Academia in several programs throughout the United States and has moved upward to Dean at the University of Colorado School of Nursing.

Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is a pioneer in creating innovative nursing approaches for mothers with substance use disorders and their children. He has published over 40 papers and presented in numerous nursing, community, and interdisciplinary forums. He was the principal investigator on two funded research projects: Packaging Project SEPA: A Proven HIV Behavioral Intervention for Use with Latinas at Highest Risk of Acquiring HIV (CDC) and Project VIDA (Miami): Violence, Intimate Relationships, and Drugs among Latinos (NIH). Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is currently the principal investigator for Project VIDA II (El Paso): Violence, Intimate Relationships, and Drugs among Latinas/os (NIH) and is the principal investigator of the Hispanic Health Disparities Research Center funded by at the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH).

He notes he would like to be remembered for his contribution to professional education and as the dean and director of neonatal nurse practitioner programs. As a dean he supported faculty to expand the profession. He is proud that with his knowledge and practice he was able to save lives and provide resources to underserved communities.

Dr. Provencio-Vasquez advise to new nurses/nurse practitioners is not to be satisfied with the status quo. He notes we have come a long way since the 70's and it is important to remember and look at the progress that has been made along the way. New nurse practitioners need to build upon the past and work to change the future.

**Keywords:** Advanced Practice Nurse, Leadership, Education, Policy

## Interview

Dr. Elias Provenicio-Vasquez

AANP Oral History Project

## **Celebration of Charter Fellow**

### **Elias Provencio-Vasquez**

**Interviewed by Barbara Sheer**

Elias Provencio-Vasquez, PhD, RN, FAAN, FAANP is Dean and Professor at the School of Nursing, University of Texas at El Paso. Over the past 30 years, Dr. Provencio- Vasquez has been a clinician, educator, administrator, and researcher. He is the first Hispanic male in the United States to receive a PhD in nursing and is well known nationally and Internationally for his work with "at risk women" and their families. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is an experienced neonatal and pediatric nurse practitioner. His background and expertise is primary care and developmental assessments of HIV and drug exposed infants, children and adolescents. Dr. Provencio- Vasquez is a pioneer in creating innovative nursing approaches (home intervention) for mothers with substance use disorders and their children. He has published over 50 papers and presented in numerous nursing, community and interdisciplinary forums. He was the principal investigator on two funded research projects: Packaging Project SEPA: A Proven HIV Behavioral Intervention for Use with Latinas at Highest Risk of Acquiring HIV (CDC) and Project VIDA (Miami): Violence, Intimate Relationships, and Drugs among Latinos (NIH). Dr. Provencio-Vasquez is currently the principal investigator for Project VIDA II (El Paso): Violence, Intimate Relationships, and Drugs among Latinas/os (NIH) and was the principal investigator of the Hispanic Health Disparities Research Center funded by at the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIH). Over the past 15 years he has been a researcher in communities of color where health disparities abound. As the former principal investigator of the Hispanic Health Disparities Research Center (HHDRS) and Dean of the School of Nursing at the University of Texas at El Paso, he was uniquely qualified to oversee the activities of the HHDRS, a \$6 million dollar Center of Excellence. His leadership experience includes being the former President for the Academy of Nurse Practitioners; Director of the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner program at the University of Texas-Houston and University of Maryland-Baltimore;

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the University of Miami. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez was a Fellow with the Robert Wood Johnson Nurse Executive Program. This leadership development program is designed to prepare a select cadre of registered nurses for influential roles in shaping the U.S. health care system of the future. Dr. Provencio-Vasquez served on the Task Force on Education and Regulation of Professional Nursing Practice for the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice, Health Resources and Services Administration. He holds "fellowship" status in several prestigious national organizations: United States Public Health Service Primary Care Policy Program; Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in Developing Leadership and Reducing Substance Abuse; American Association of Colleges of Nursing Leadership for Academic Nursing Program; American Academy of Nurse Practitioners and American Academy of Nursing.

**Interview:**

BLS: In 2000 you were selected as a charter fellow what has changed since then?

EPV: The fellowship has gained recognition and prestige since 2000. At the time of the induction I was a practicing neonatal nurse practitioner, had a PhD and was an assistant Professor at University of Texas in Houston. I was president of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, but it was early in my professional career. I was proud to be included in the first cohort for my practice. The fellowship has grown considerably since 2000 with the first cohort of 20. Throughout the years the fellowship has become a prestigious accomplishment and is recognized by colleges of nursing as well as the nurse practitioner community.

BLS: What do you see are the pivotal moments in the past years?

EPV: When I became a neonatal nurse practitioner in the 70s I had an associate degree. Throughout the years the educational requirements have increase from AD/diploma to BSN, then MSN. Today we are looking at the DNP as an entry point.

The scope of practice and prescriptive authority continues to evolve with more and more states moving toward full practice authority. Nurse practitioners are making a significant impact in the health care in the US and are becoming more visible.

There have been changes in the practice of neonatal nurse practitioners. In the early day they were employed by the hospitals. Later they joined neonatology group practices. This afforded them higher salaries. The current trend is moving back toward hospital employment as more and more physicians are electing to be hospital employees. It is moving full circle. Neonatal nurse practitioners were the first to establish the role in acute care and are highly valued. In larger cities Acute Care Nurse Practitioners are doing an amazing job. In smaller cities the role is still evolving, and they are not utilized to the maximum of their scope. This will change in the future as their value is recognized.

BLS: How have you been able to impact the nurse practitioner movement? You were the first NNP to earn a PhD.

EPV: As a dean I have made a difference in nursing education and I have been instrumental in providing the faculty with the resources they need. The faculty are the clinical experts. Resources have enabled them to increase enrollment. At UTEP we currently have 500 students in our graduate program, which is 100% online and has a 90% first time pass rate. The additional resources I have provided, as Dean, has given the faculty the opportunity to attend educational conferences to maintain their skills and expertise, and incorporate Evidence Based Practice into the curriculum.

BLS: Is there anything you would change if you had it to do over again?

EPV: My initial education was at the associate degree level then the Neonatal Nurse Practitioner Program. That was the standard in the 70s. It would have been an advantage to have additional education earlier on, but the profession was just beginning to evolve. I have not practiced in 15 years and feel that I missed out by not having a higher degree earlier to enhance practice.

BLS: You were a minority in those early days? There were not many men in nursing, did you encounter any challenges?

EVP: Initially I felt that people prejudged me until they got to know me. When I applied and was accepted for an academic position, one faculty member told me I was the “token” male. I found this hurtful and was not sure if it was an insult or just a statement. That was many years ago and I have not experienced any unusual challenges. We all have challenges and learn to surmount them.

BLS: As a neonatal nurse practitioner how were you treated?

EVP: In the neonatal unit or going to codes I was treated as a valued member of the team and respected for my contributions.

BLS: How would you like to be remembered?

EVP: I would like to be remembered for my contributions to nursing education, as a dean and director of neo- natal nurse practitioner programs. As a dean I develop talented faculty. In my practice I was able to save lives. That is an important legacy.

BLS: What advice would you give to new nurse practitioners?

EVP: Not to be satisfied with the status quo. We have come a long way since the 70s. It’s important to look at the progress that has been made along the way. It is critical to keep moving forward. Advanced Practice Nurses have so much potential, and it is important for new nurse practitioners to build upon the past and change the future.

BLS: What do you see in the future?

EVP: I see nurse practitioners having more authority and being more influential in health care. They are valued now but will become more powerful and influential in the health care arena. New specialties have emerge in the acute care settings such as emergency room and trauma ARNP’s. Primary care will continue to very important. I think there will be more emphasis on primary care in the BSN curriculum and will be reflected in the NCLEX exams. There will be a new wave and new types of nurses. The future is bright for nurse practitioners. It has been an interesting journey.

