

University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

ScholarWorks @ UTRGV

---

School of Medicine Publications and  
Presentations

School of Medicine

---

7-2019

## Gen-Z ambassadors: students supporting persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers in the Rio Grande Valley

Sofia G. Homes

*South Texas Academy for Medical Professions*

Samantha R. Woo

*Science Academy of South Texas Sci Tech*

Ashley G. Caldera

*South Texas Academy for Medical Professions*

Sergio N. Gonzalez-Eymard

*Saint Joseph Academy*

Rosa V. Pirela

*University of Zulia*

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/som\\_pub](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/som_pub)



Part of the [Medicine and Health Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Homes, Sofia G.; Woo, Samantha R.; Caldera, Ashley G.; Gonzalez-Eymard, Sergio N.; Pirela, Rosa V.; Fernandez, Francisco; and Maestre, Gladys E., "Gen-Z ambassadors: students supporting persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers in the Rio Grande Valley" (2019). *School of Medicine Publications and Presentations*. 18.

[https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/som\\_pub/18](https://scholarworks.utrgv.edu/som_pub/18)

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Medicine at ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. It has been accepted for inclusion in School of Medicine Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UTRGV. For more information, please contact [justin.white@utrgv.edu](mailto:justin.white@utrgv.edu), [william.flores01@utrgv.edu](mailto:william.flores01@utrgv.edu).

---

**Authors**

Sofia G. Homes, Samantha R. Woo, Ashley G. Caldera, Sergio N. Gonzalez-Eymard, Rosa V. Pirela, Francisco Fernandez, and Gladys E. Maestre

# Gen-Z ambassadors: students supporting persons with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers in the Rio Grande Valley

[Sofia G. Homes<sup>1</sup>](#) [Samantha R. Woo<sup>2</sup>](#) [Ashley G. Caldera<sup>1</sup>](#) [Sergio N. Gonzalez-Eymard<sup>3</sup>](#) [Rosa V. Pirela<sup>4</sup>](#)  
[Francisco Fernandez<sup>5,6</sup>](#) [Gladys E. Maestre<sup>6,7</sup>](#)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jalz.2019.06.1098>

**Background:** Youth participation in policy, research, education and community development initiatives is a right embedded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, General Assembly, 1989). However, avenues for youth participation in health promotion and care remains limited. Our Ambassadors program prepares high-school students on the Texas-Mexico border to understand and empathize with persons with Alzheimer's disease (PwAD) and to empower their family and caregivers, consummating the UNCRC in the service of transformative community change actions.

**Methods:** Our long-term objective is youth participation, defined as practices that involve collaboration between students and various community stakeholders in AD. The initial phase of the program is the design of a curriculum for early high school students to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required for that participation. We used a cooperative strategy (a high school students-faculty collaborative), guided by empowerment and ecological theories to achieve optimal youth advancement in the context of the UNCRC social, health and cultural rights of children.

**Results:** The GenZ Ambassadors curricular units were identified through an iterative process in which faculty documented their activities with youth and tested sessions ranging from the biological basis and clinical presentations of AD to family impact, principles of caregiving, youth as change agents, building intergenerational partnerships, and self-reflection exercises. Ambassadors selected settings and strategies designed to empower their peers and to transform communities by skill and confidence building.

**Discussion:** The process implemented and content analysis revealed a variety of themes that benefited persons with AD and their caregivers in the Rio Grande Valley. Several strategies will be tested to generate interactive training materials and culturally and age-competent as well as delivery strategies, including peer-to-peer delivery.

Funding: National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Aging 1 P30 AG059305-01.