



2022 MPS OUTSTANDING PSYCHIATRIST AWARDS

EDUCATION - Ricardo Vela, MD



Dr. Ricardo Vela did his premedical courses at Boston College and then studied at the University of Puerto Rico where he earned his Bachelor of Science degree (Magna cum Laude) and his MD degree.

He then moved to New York where he completed an internship in Social Pediatrics at the Montefiore Hospital and Medical Center, Bronx, NY and did residencies in both General Psychiatry and Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine/Bronx Psychiatric Center, Bronx, NY. (AECOM). He is certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology in both Adult Psychiatry and Adolescent Psychiatry. Later he was appointed Examiner for both boards.

Following his residency, Dr. Vela stayed on at the AECOM affiliate, Bronx Lebanon Hospital, where he directed the Child, Adolescent and Family Services. During his 15-year service there in the poorest congressional district in the country, he was able to increase the number of patient visits from less than 800 to 32,000 per year and to expand the clinical staff to 44 professionals creating one of the largest child and adolescent psychiatry outpatient programs in the U.S. In addition, Dr. Vela at first coordinated medical student training in child psychiatry, and then was appointed Director of Residency Training for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry in the Bronx-Lebanon Track of the AECOM residency Program. In 1981 he was appointed Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

In 1994 Dr. Vela moved to Brown University where he directed the outpatient service and did psychopharmacology research with adolescents until 1997. Following a brief period as director of the Adolescent Inpatient Unit at Somerville Hospital, Dr. Vela was recruited to the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine. There he was named Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Training Program. He also directed the University Hospital's psychiatric clinic for children and adolescents.

In 2001 Dr. Vela was recruited by Boston University School of Medicine to be Director of Pediatric Psychopharmacology. While at BU he, in collaboration with the Divisions of Pediatric Neurology and Neuropsychology, developed a neuropsychology/neuropsychiatry consultation service. He also developed a PGY 4 course in Advanced Psychiatric Neurobiology for which he received the Swartz Award for Teacher of the Year.

In 2010 he moved to the North Suffolk Mental Health Association as Director of Pediatric Psychopharmacology, Director of Child Psychiatry and Psychiatrist-in-Chief for Child and Family Services. In 2011 he moved to Massachusetts General Hospital where, although partially retired, he continues to teach in the MGH Child Psychiatry Fellowship Program on Pediatric Neuroscience and transcultural aspects in the treatment of Latino children and their families.

Dr. Vela is a distinguished life fellow of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and of the American Psychiatric Association. He has been an APA/NIMH Minority Fellow and member of the Task Force on Transcultural Aspects of Ethnocentricity Among Psychiatrists, Task Force on Services to Children and Adolescents in Community Mental Health Centers and the Council on Children, Adolescents, and their Families, and Area 1 Representative to Hispanic/Latino Caucus.

Dr. Vela was a reviewer for the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, has published many abstracts, book chapters and peer reviewed journal articles. For many years he taught courses on "The Neuroanatomy of Emotions: from Brain to Clinical Practice" at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association and was commended as "gifted teacher."

Dr. Vela says he feels most proud and fulfilled in his over 40-year career by having helped an underserved minority patient population of children, adolescents and their loving, struggling families and of the opportunities he has had to teach residents to do likewise.

The Massachusetts Psychiatric Society is pleased to present Dr. Ricardo Vela with the 2022 Outstanding Psychiatrist Award in Education.