



**Dr. Irene Blanco's** research interests focus on addressing health disparities and the social determinants of health in rheumatology. She is currently working with the American College of Rheumatology, through a grant from the Rheumatology Research Foundation to create a graduate medical education curriculum for health disparities. In addition, she and the college, with the support of the Office of Minority Health, are also investigating how to leverage community health workers to help increase the recruitment of patients of color into lupus clinical trials.

Dr. Blanco completed her medical education at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine, where she was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha honor society. She then went on to complete her internal medicine residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital- Weill Cornell Medical Center. Upon completing residency, she returned to Einstein to complete her rheumatology fellowship.

In 2010 she was awarded the Bronx CREED Health Disparities Faculty Development Fellowship which allowed her to complete her Master's degree in Clinical Research at Einstein. Because of the significant morbidity and mortality of lupus and lupus nephritis in patient of color, she originally investigated the role of urinary biomarkers in lupus nephritis. However, as her career has transitioned into a more educational and administrative position, her research has also pivoted as well.

As an educator, Dr. Blanco tries to instill an appreciation for the rheumatic diseases and the importance of formal education in musculoskeletal medicine across the curricular continuum. She was the long-time course director for the Musculoskeletal Diseases course at Einstein and was awarded the Samuel M. Rosen Award for Outstanding Preclinical Teaching. As the course director and the rheumatology training fellowship director, Einstein has led the country in recruiting fellows to rheumatology. This is incredibly important now given that there is a significant workforce shortage of rheumatologists. This severely will limit access to patients with arthritis, which is the primary cause of disability in the US.

In addition, as the Associate Dean of Diversity Enhancement at Einstein, Dr. Blanco focuses on the diversification of the medical and biomedical workforce as a whole. She believes that by bringing people from traditionally marginalized groups into medicine; and supporting them as they cultivate positions of leadership, are we to truly address the needs of our most vulnerable of patients.