

Edith A. Perez, M.D.
2013 Susan G. Komen®
Brinker Award for Scientific Distinction in Clinical Research



Edith A. Perez, M.D. is being honored for her seminal contributions to the field of breast cancer treatment, which have helped to shape the standard of care for breast cancer patients globally. Dr. Perez has devoted her career to improving breast cancer patient care and expanding the understanding of breast cancer biology. She has led a wide range of translational clinical trials testing new therapeutic agents for the treatment and prevention of breast cancer---trials that have had a lasting impact on women facing a breast cancer diagnosis.

Dr. Perez's early career focused on the symptom control and quality of life for cancer patients during treatment. Her clinical research included studies investigating ways to mitigate nausea related to platinum therapy, and prevent and treat osteoporosis and hot flashes caused by breast cancer targeted therapies. She also investigated new therapeutic options for the treatment and management of metastatic breast cancer. As she advanced in her career, Dr. Perez turned her focus to the evaluation of compounds designed to fight HER2-positive breast cancer. In 2005, she reported on the results of an international breast cancer clinical trial she led that showed that the addition of trastuzumab/Herceptin to adjuvant chemotherapy significantly reduces recurrence and improves survival in patients with HER2-positive invasive breast cancer. This result changed the way breast cancer is treated.

Dr. Perez followed up this discovery with her present work, which aims to develop reliable biomarkers to predict response to trastuzumab, a therapy that is not without its toxicities. To monitor the efficacy of trastuzumab therapy, Dr. Perez and her team examine the protein, DNA aberration, and gene expression profiles of primary breast tumors or blood from patients on clinical trials, and correlate this molecular information with clinical outcomes. These studies will help identify biomarkers that could be used to predict which women would benefit most from trastuzumab, and spare those women who would not benefit from the drug from experiencing unwanted side effects.

Dr. Perez earned her medical degree from the University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine in San Juan and completed her residency in internal medicine at the Loma Linda University Medical Center in California. She served as general internist in the Division of National Health Services Corps, Los Angeles, and as a fellow in Hematology/Oncology at Martinez Veterans' Administration Medical Center at the University of California, Davis School of Medicine.

Currently based at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, Dr. Perez is a cancer specialist and an internationally known translational researcher. She is the Deputy Director at Large of the Mayo Clinic Cancer Center, Director of Mayo Clinic's Breast Specialty Council, and the Serene M. and Frances C. Durling Professor of Medicine. She also developed and chairs Mayo Clinic's Breast Cancer Translational Genomics Program.

In addition to her work in clinical trials and in biomarker development, Dr. Perez has made significant contributions to many cancer organizations including ASCO, the AACR, and the IOM as well as NIH study sections and councils. In each of these organizations, she is a persistent and highly effective advocate for all patients, (including minorities) and has committed a significant amount of efforts to global education, as well as mentoring colleagues and junior investigators. Dr. Perez is an insightful physician and a highly innovative translational clinical researcher. Her efforts to organize and carry out clinical trials have significantly advanced the field of breast cancer treatment. Her contributions to the optimized management of breast cancer – specifically for women with HER2-positive breast cancer- will benefit breast cancer patients for years to come.