Alex Ortega, Ph.D.

Alex Ortega, PhD, grew up in Hawai‘i and attended Hickam Elementary, Aliamanu Middle, and Radford High Schools. He is a health policy and health care equity researcher and Professor and Director of the Center for Population Health and Community Impact in the Dornsife School of Public Health at Drexel University. He is also a Senior Associate Editor of Health Services Research (HSR), the official journal of AcademyHealth.

Dr. Ortega is known for his research and public advocacy in improving the health and well-being of Latino youth and families in the United States, especially those who are undocumented immigrants or are otherwise disenfranchised. He has directed NIH, AHRQ, and foundation-funded research for nearly 25 years in a variety of sites and contexts, including Puerto Rico, California, and New England. His observational and intervention research has been in a variety of areas focused on Latino health and health care, including: access to and use of health services for youth and families, the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) on population health and health inequities, mental health services and psychiatric epidemiology, and community-engaged interventions to improve food environments in urban food swamps. Dr. Ortega is currently the Principal Investigator of three NIH R01 funded studies. Two are focused on understanding the impact of increasing frequency and intensity of natural and manmade disasters in Puerto Rico on the mental and physical health of the population and on the island’s entire healthcare system. A third study is based in California and is determining the complexities of access to care for mixed status Latino families, where at least one family member is an undocumented immigrant and one is a US citizen, throughout the state.

Dr. Ortega teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in health care policy and public health systems. He previously served on the public health faculties of UCLA and Yale University.

Dr. Ortega holds a Ph.D. in epidemiologic science from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, an M.P.H. in epidemiology and biostatistics from Boston University, and a bachelor of arts in economics from the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque.