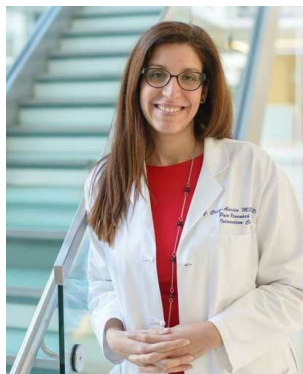




CANDIDATE PROFILE

Yenisel Cruz-Almeida, United States

Neuroscience, Epidemiology, Clinical Translational Researcher

Please provide a brief description of your work and interest in the pain field.

My research career has been driven by a central question: why do some people develop chronic pain while others do not, and why does this risk shift across the lifespan? For over two decades, I have worked as a translational pain scientist integrating neuroscience (neuroimaging, Epigenetics, quantitative sensory testing), and biobehavioral phenotyping to uncover the mechanisms underlying chronic pain in aging populations. This work has convinced me that the most stubborn problems in pain science cannot be solved by any single discipline working in isolation.

That conviction is why team science sits at the heart of my work. As Director of the NIH HEAL-funded UF PAIN TEAM (R90/T90) training program, I prepare the next generation of pain researchers to work fluently across engineering, epidemiology, addiction medicine, and the basic and clinical sciences. I deliberately build training around collaboration, data harmonization, and convergence research, equipping trainees to lead the interdisciplinary teams that modern pain research demands. This same philosophy carries through my leadership of large multi-PI consortia, where coordinating diverse expertise toward shared goals is essential.

My interest in the pain field is ultimately about people, both the patients we serve and the scientists we mentor to solve this complex puzzle. I am committed to advancing a pain research community that is rigorous, collaborative, and inclusive, and I would be honored to bring that commitment to the IASP Council.

Please provide a brief statement of why you are interested in running for Councilor—why would someone want to vote for you?

I am running for IASP Council because I believe our toughest challenges in pain demand a truly global, collaborative, and inclusive community, and I want to help build it. Having spent two decades in translational pain research spanning neuroimaging, epigenetics, and aging, and directing an NIH-funded team-science training program, I have seen how connection across disciplines and borders drives discovery. A vote for me is a vote for someone who champions emerging researchers, bridges diverse perspectives, and listens. I would work to ensure that every member, in every region and at every career stage, is supported and heard.

Collaborative Leadership and Teamwork: Collaboration is key to the success of IASP's initiatives and programs. Can you share examples of your experience working collaboratively within diverse teams or committees to achieve common goals? How do you plan to foster collaboration among Council members and committees to drive impactful outcomes?

Collaborative leadership has defined my career. I currently serve as multi-PI of the CREATE consortium (U54), a national initiative uniting clinical, basic, and engineering scientists to advance temporomandibular disorder research, where my role is to align diverse expertise and institutional cultures toward shared scientific goals. In the NIH HEAL RE-JOIN consortium, I led the development of harmonized phenotyping protocols and common data elements across multiple sites, an effort that required building consensus among investigators with very different methodological traditions. As Director of the UF PAIN TEAM training program, I have made team science and cross-disciplinary collaboration the explicit foundation of how we train the next generation.

I have also learned that effective collaboration depends on transparent governance and trust. As two-term elected Treasurer of USASP and Chair of its Finance Committee, and as Chair of an NIH study section, I have facilitated group decision-making where every voice is heard and outcomes are reached fairly.

As a Councilor, I would foster collaboration by establishing clear shared goals at the outset, ensuring committees have well-defined charges and the autonomy to pursue them, and creating regular channels for cross-committee communication so efforts are coordinated rather than siloed. I would actively seek input from underrepresented regions and early-career members, recognizing that the strongest outcomes emerge from genuinely diverse perspectives. Above all, I would lead by listening, building consensus while keeping the Council focused on tangible, member-centered impact that advances IASP's global mission in pain research, education, and care.

Experience in Financial Oversight and Governance: The Council plays a crucial role in overseeing the financial management and governance of IASP. Can you describe your experience in financial oversight and governance, particularly in reviewing budgets, financial reports, and implementing financial policies? How will you contribute to ensuring the fiscal health and accountability of the association?

I bring direct, hands-on financial governance experience at exactly the level this role requires. As two-term elected Treasurer of the US Association for the Study of Pain (USASP), the US national chapter of IASP, and Chair of its Finance Committee, I have overseen the organization's budgets, reviewed financial reports, and helped establish the financial policies and controls that guide a growing professional society. In this role I have learned to balance fiscal prudence with strategic investment, ensuring resources are directed toward initiatives that deliver the greatest value to members while safeguarding the organization's long-term stability.

Beyond USASP, I have managed multimillion-dollar federal research budgets as principal investigator and multi-PI on numerous NIH grants and large consortia, including U54 and R90/T90 programs. This requires rigorous budget planning, compliance with federal financial regulations, transparent reporting, and continuous accountability to funders, experience that translates directly to the stewardship of an association's finances.

As a Councilor, I would contribute by reviewing budgets and financial statements with both diligence and a strategic eye, asking whether spending aligns with IASP's mission and priorities. I would support transparent reporting practices so that members understand how resources are used, and advocate for sound reserve and risk-management policies that protect IASP through changing economic conditions. Having served on the governance side of a pain organization, I understand the fiduciary responsibilities of this role and would approach them with the seriousness, independence, and member-focused accountability they demand.

Global Engagement and Representation: Pain is a universal experience, and IASP's reach extends across diverse regions and communities worldwide. As a Councilor, how do you plan to engage with and represent the interests of the global pain community as a Councilor, ensuring inclusivity, diversity, and responsiveness to the needs of various stakeholders?

Pain spares no community, yet access to pain research, education, and care remains profoundly unequal across the world. As a Councilor, I would work to ensure IASP reflects and serves the full diversity of its global membership.

My own path shapes this commitment. As a Latina scientist and first-generation academic, I understand how much representation matters, and how talent is too often overlooked when communities lack a seat at the table. Throughout my career I have prioritized inclusion: mentoring trainees from underrepresented backgrounds, building diverse research teams, and serving on diversity, equity, and access committees within USASP and at my institution. I have collaborated with international colleagues across Europe, Latin America, Asia, and beyond, and I value how differently pain is understood, expressed, and treated across cultural contexts.

As a Councilor, I would engage the global community by actively seeking input from regions that are underrepresented in IASP leadership, rather than waiting for it to come to us. I would support chapters and SIGs in lower-resourced settings, champion accessible education and training opportunities, and ensure that IASP's programs are responsive to local needs rather than one-size-fits-all. I would advocate for diverse representation across committees and speaking platforms, and for policies that lower barriers to participation, including cost, language, and travel.

Above all, I would listen. Genuine global engagement means treating every member's perspective as essential to our shared mission, and I would bring that conviction, and that openness, to every Council decision.

IASP Involvement

- Reviewer, Awards Committee – Pain in Older Adults SIG 2021–
- Officer, Elected Executive Committee – Pain in Older Adults SIG 2022–2025
- Member, World Congress Financial Aid Committee 2025–
- Officer, Nominated to Executive Committee – Neuroimaging & Pain SIG 2026–

YENISEL CRUZ-ALMEIDA, MSPH, PhD

Professor, Department of Community Dentistry & Behavioral Sciences | College of Dentistry, University of Florida
Associate Director, Pain Research & Intervention Center of Excellence (PRICE) | Director, R90/T90 HEAL UF PAIN TEAM Program
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PERSONAL STATEMENT

I am a tenured Professor and translational pain scientist with over 20 years of experience studying chronic pain across the lifespan. My research integrates neuroimaging, epigenetics, quantitative sensory testing, and ecological momentary assessment to identify biopsychosocial mechanisms underlying pain in aging populations—with a particular focus on temporomandibular disorders (TMD), knee osteoarthritis, and age-related central sensitization. I am currently MPI of the NIH-funded CREATE consortium (U54 DE035413) and Contact PI of R01 AG076082 examining biopsychosocial predictors of mobility decline. As Associate Director of PRICE and Director of the NIH HEAL R90/T90 UF PAIN TEAM, I am deeply committed to training the next generation of pain researchers. My active involvement with IASP—including an elected role in the Pain in Older Adults SIG (2022–2025) and nomination to the Neuroimaging & Pain SIG Executive Committee (2026–)—reflects my dedication to international pain science collaboration. I have also served two elected terms as Treasurer of the US Association for the Study of Pain (USASP), the US national chapter of IASP, where I have provided sustained financial stewardship and governance experience directly relevant to the responsibilities of an IASP Councilor. I would bring this breadth of expertise and service commitment to the IASP Council.

EDUCATION / TRAINING

Institution & Location	Degree	Year	Field of Study
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL	BS	2001	Microbiology & Cell Science, Immunology
University of Miami, Miami, FL	MSPH	2004	Epidemiology, Biostatistics
University of Miami, Miami, FL	PhD	2011	Neuroscience, Pain
University of Florida, Gainesville, FL	Post-Doc	2012	Aging, Pain, Neuroepidemiology

POSITIONS AND EMPLOYMENT

Academic Appointments

Research Assistant/Associate → Senior Associate II, University of Miami (Miami Project)	1996–2006
PhD Student, Neuroscience Graduate Program, University of Miami	2006–2011
Post-Doctoral Fellow, Pain Research & Intervention Center of Excellence, UF	2011–2012
Research Assistant Professor (Non-Tenure), University of Florida	2012–2014
Assistant Professor (Tenure-Accruing), University of Florida	2014–2021
Associate Director, Pain Research & Intervention Center of Excellence (PRICE), UF	2019–present
Associate Professor with Tenure, University of Florida	2021–2025
Professor with Tenure, University of Florida	2025–present
Director of Clinical & Translational Research, College of Dentistry, UF	2025–present

IASP Involvement

Officer, Elected Executive Committee – Pain in Older Adults SIG	2022–2025
Member, World Congress Financial Aid Committee	2025–
Officer, Nominated to Executive Committee – Neuroimaging & Pain SIG	2026–
Reviewer, Awards Committee – Pain in Older Adults SIG	2021–

Other Professional Leadership (Selected)

Treasurer (Re-elected), US Association for the Study of Pain (USASP) Board of Directors	2022–2028
Chair, NIH/CSR Neurobiology of Pain & Itch (NPI) Study Section	2023–2025
Permanent Member, NIH/CSR Neurobiology of Pain & Itch (NPI)	2021–2025
Associate Editor, Journal of Pain	2022–present
Member, North American Pain School Executive Committee	2021–present

Honors and Awards (Selected)

University of Florida Research Foundation Professorship Award	2025–
NIH HEAL Initiative Pain Strategic Planning – NANS Working Group	2024–
McKnight Brain Institute (MBI) Leadership Award	2019

University of Florida Term Professorship Award	2019–2022
UTMB Pepper OAIC Team Science Leadership Scholarship Award	2018
APS Young Investigator Travel Award (×3)	2004, 2005, 2010

SELECTED PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS (FROM 100+ TOTAL)

Most Relevant to IASP Nomination

- Cruz-Almeida Y. Integrated biopsychosocial signatures: moving beyond isolated biomarkers to predict, prevent, and treat persistent pain. *Pain*. 2025;166(11S):S99–S102.
- Cruz-Almeida Y, et al. Brain aging among individuals with trigeminal neuralgia. *Neurobiol Pain*. 2025;18:100201.
- Valdes-Hernandez PA, ...Cruz-Almeida Y. Brain-predicted age difference estimated using DeepBrainNet is significantly associated with pain and function. *Pain*. 2023. PMID: 37490099.
- Cruz-Almeida Y, ...Fillingim RB. Chronic Pain is Associated with a Brain Aging Biomarker in Community-Dwelling Older Adults. *Pain*. 2019;160(5):1119–1130.
- Quidé Y, ...Cruz-Almeida Y, ...Thompson PM, Gustin SM. ENIGMA-Chronic Pain: a worldwide initiative to identify brain correlates of chronic pain. *Pain*. 2024;165(12):2662–2666.
- Cruz-Almeida Y, Sinha P, Rani A, et al. Epigenetic aging is associated with clinical and experimental pain in community-dwelling older adults. *Mol Pain*. 2019;15:1744806919871819.
- Strath LJ, ...Cruz-Almeida Y. Differential DNA methylation profiles of Alzheimer's disease-related genomic pathways in chronic pain. *J Alzheimers Dis Rep*. 2024;8(1):1549–1557.

Additional Recent Publications of Relevance

- Cruz CJ, Tamargo JA, Abbas M, ...Cruz-Almeida Y. Hypertension is associated with knee OA pain in an age-dependent manner. *Exp Gerontol*. 2025;212:112938.
- Tamargo JA, Strath LJ, Cruz-Almeida Y. High-impact pain is associated with epigenetic aging in middle-aged and older adults. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci*. 2024. PMID: 38855906.
- Cruz-Almeida Y, et al. RE-JOIN Consortium: Clinical and biobehavioral phenotypic assessments and data harmonization recommendations. *Neurobiol Pain*. 2024;16:100163.
- Cardoso JS, ...Cruz-Almeida Y. Experimental pain phenotyping in community-dwelling individuals with knee OA. *Pain*. 2016;157(9):2104–14.
- Cruz-Almeida Y & Fillingim RB. Can quantitative sensory testing move us closer to mechanism-based pain management? *Pain Medicine*. 2014;61–72.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

Ongoing Research Support (Selected)

U54 DE035413 – CREATE Consortium (MPI; Clinical Project PI)	2025–2030
NIH/NIDCR Collaborative for REsearch to Advance TMD Evidence	
R01 AG076082 – Biopsychosocial pain predictors of mobility decline in aging (Contact PI)	2022–2027
NIH/NIA	
T90 NS085527 / R90 AR085802 – UF PAIN TEAM (Contact PI/Program Director)	2024–2029
NIH/NIAMS HEAL Initiative Interdisciplinary pain training program	
R01 AR085334 – Psychometric reliability of behavioral metrics for OA pain in horses (MPI)	2024–2029
NIH/NINDS	
R21 DA056813 – Oxytocin to reduce opioid abuse liability in older adults (MPI)	2023–2025
NIH/NIDA	
R01 MD017496 – Impact of structural racism and discrimination on chronic pain (Co-I)	2023–2028
NIH/NIMHD	

Completed Research Support (Selected)

K01 AG048259 – Neuroimaging Age-Related Changes in Pain Modulation (PI)	2015–2020
NIH/NIA	
R01 AG059809 – Mechanisms of Oxytocin's Analgesia in Older Adults (Contact PI)	2018–2025
NIH/NIA	
R01 AG067757 – Biobehavioral basis of knee osteoarthritis pain (PI)	2020–2026
NIH/NIA	