

Inaugural U.S. Chagas Disease Meeting coming to Tulane this month

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Pierre Buekens, pictured above, will be one of the keynote speakers at the inaugural U.S. Chagas Disease Meeting, set for March 26-27 in New Orleans. (photo by Derek Bridges)

Tulane University will host the inaugural [U.S. Chagas Disease Meeting](#), March 26-27 in New Orleans.

The first-of-its-kind event aims to bring together clinicians, researchers and public health leaders from across the country to address the growth of Chagas disease in the United States. By convening experts working in different fields, the meeting will focus on improving diagnosis, expanding screening efforts, advancing research and strengthening coordination of care for patients affected by the disease.

“The southern United States is one of the regions where Chagas disease is gaining increasing public health relevance, and Tulane has a long-standing tradition of leadership in tropical medicine, infectious diseases and global health,” said event organizer Claudia Patricia Herrera, assistant professor at Tulane’s Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.

“Our goal is to help build a stronger, more connected network that can advance research and ultimately improve outcomes for patients affected by Chagas disease in the U.S. and across the Americas.”

— Dr. Claudia Patricia Herrera

[Chagas disease](#), also known as American trypanosomiasis, is caused by the parasite *Trypanosoma cruzi* and is transmitted to people and animals primarily by triatomine insects, commonly called “kissing bugs.”

The disease is increasingly recognized as an important health concern in the United States, particularly in the South as triatomine bugs carrying *T. cruzi* have been detected across the southern United States, including Louisiana. Infection occurs when parasite-containing feces from an infected bug enter the body through a bite wound or mucous membranes.

Herrera, a Chagas disease expert and co-chair of the U.S. Chagas Disease Research Consortium, points to New Orleans as being a natural fit for a conference of this kind. “Hosting this meeting in New Orleans reflects both the regional relevance of the disease and Tulane’s role as a national and international hub for collaboration, training and innovation in Chagas disease research and care.”

The meeting will include keynote addresses from Dr. Carlos Morillo and [Dr. Pierre Buekens](#).

Morillo is a cardiologist, electrophysiologist, and professor of cardiac sciences at the Cumming School of Medicine at the University of Calgary, and the Cardiology Division Chief of the Libin Cardiovascular Institute of Alberta. His main research interests include the development of clinical trials in the area of cardiac arrhythmias, syncope and treatment of Chagas Disease.

Buekens, former dean of the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, is the W. H. Watkins Professor and director of the Tulane Center for Emerging Reproductive and Perinatal Epidemiology in the Celia Scott Weatherhead School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine. His research focuses on reproductive epidemiology, with a special interest in congenital Chagas Disease.

“Our goal is to help build a stronger, more connected network that can advance research and ultimately improve outcomes for patients affected by Chagas disease in the U.S. and across the Americas,” Herrera said.

More information on attending the U.S. Chagas Disease Meeting can be found [here](#).