

ALUMNI STORIES



Amanda Bruegl, M.D.
GYN/Oncologist
Associate Professor
Oregon Health & Science University

Portland, Oregon

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
Cancer Center

Making Cancer History®

Her story began at home

Dr. Amanda Bruegl, a citizen of Oneida Nation and descendent of Stockbridge-Munsee Nation, grew up in Wisconsin. When she graduated from medical school, she could have chosen to live anywhere, yet she chose to relocate to Oregon because of the opportunity to pursue a research career in cancer prevention within the Native American community. And in support of her work, Oregon Health & Science University provided a foundation for her research-based career.

According to the 2021 census, Oregon has more than 80,670 American Indians living in the state's nine federally recognized tribes, but deep-rooted distrust of the U.S. government has only increased tribal citizens' wariness of the healthcare system, and as a result, health inequities have persisted for decades.

Dr. Bruegl travels one day per month to a reservation-based clinic to provide basic gynecologic and gynecologic oncology medical care. And although Dr. Bruegl acknowledges that anyone can help tribal citizens, it is her shared history and experiences that put her in a position to develop the trust of those she serves.

Dr. Bruegl focuses her research on gynecologic and cervical cancer prevention. Also, some of her studies include workforce development to increase the number of Native Americans who choose healthcare as a profession. The percentage of Native American healthcare professionals is low compared to that of other ethnicities. If a tribal citizen has never seen a native physician, they may not envision themselves becoming a physician or any other type of health care professional. Dr. Bruegl's work is yielding results, as the Oregon Health & Science University has one of the highest numbers of native trainees in the country.

Dr. Bruegl is living proof of the success that comes from aligning your career with tribal priorities. Collaborating with tribes on a shared goal helps her to make small differences in the disparities Native Americans experience in the healthcare system. Aligning her values with tribal priorities and fostering good relationships with tribal leadership are the keys to her success and the impetuses for her to get up every morning to continue sharing her scientific talents for the betterment of others.

Native American Health Facts

- *Native adults are 50% more likely to be obese, increasing the risk for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, and stroke.*
- *Since so many Indigenous Peoples live below the poverty line, they often lack access to fresh produce and healthier foods, instead, living off highly processed packaged foods — which only exacerbates the prevalence of obesity.*
- *Indigenous groups also suffer from untreated mental illness at alarming rates. Native Americans die by suicide at higher rates than any other ethnic group in the U.S.*
- *Native Americans also struggle with substance abuse at a rate higher than other groups in the U.S.*
- *These health disparities have nothing to do with any predispositions inherent in Native American people, but rather a lack of health resources, funding, and culturally competent care allotted to their communities. Cultural loss and historical trauma have also been shown to have adverse health effects throughout generations.*

MD Anderson program(s) in which I trained

Clinical Fellowship, Gynecologic Oncology – 2011-2015

Academic area of specialization

Gynecologic Oncology

Current Employer

Oregon Health & Science University

Current Location

Portland, Oregon

Current Position

- Associate Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Associate Division Director
- Clinical Assistant Director, Community Outreach & Engagement, Knight Cancer Institute Researcher
- Vice Chair of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Associate Director of the Education Core, Northwest Native American Center of Excellence

Works of Interest

- [A 50-year Commitment to American Indian and Alaska Native Women.](#)
- [What Should Physicians Consider About American Indian/Alaska Native Women's Reproductive Freedom?](#)
- [Does obesity influence the preferred treatment approach for early-stage cervical cancer? A cost-effective analysis.](#)
- [Measurement of American Indian and Alaska Native Racial Identity Among Medical School Applicants, Matriculants, and Graduates, 1996 – 2017.](#)
- [Link to full list of Dr. Amanda Bruegl's Works of Interest](#)

Mentors

While at MD Anderson, Dr. Bruegl benefited from several mentors, yet the one that stands out is Russell Broaddus, M.D., Ph.D. Dr. Broaddus wasn't heavy-handed and took the time to get to know her as a person as well as her professional goals. He taught her how to make her research her own, which made the experience more powerful and meaningful.

Dr. Russell Broaddus, M.D., Ph.D., was a faculty member in the MD Anderson Cancer Center Department of Pathology from 1999-2019.

Family

Married with one child. *“We spend lots of family weekends outdoors and away from the city, enjoying parks, mini-hikes, and chasing a toddler around.”*

Undergraduate school(s) from which I received a degree(s)

University of Wisconsin
BS, Biochemistry – 2003

Graduate school(s) from which I received a degree(s)

University of Washington School of Medicine
Seattle, WA
MD, Indian Health Pathway Distinction - 2007

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHealth Graduate School of
Biomedical Sciences
Houston, TX
MS, Cancer Biology – 2013

Oregon Health & Science University
Portland, OR
Master of Clinical Research – 2021

High school from which I graduated

Roncalli High School
Manitowoc, WI
1993

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