

## PUERTO RICO

### **Rafael Rodríguez**

*Secretary of Health*

*Puerto Rico Department of Health*

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Rafael Rodríguez Mercado is the secretary of the Puerto Rico Department of Health. The mission of the department is to promote and preserve health as an essential condition in humans. As health department secretary, Rodríguez-Mercado is responsible for the design and implementation of the public health policy as encompassed in the government platform of the current administration. His agenda is based on three strategic pillars: a patient-centered health system, fair and accessible health services, as well as an emphasis on primary care and prevention.

Since 1997, Rodríguez-Mercado has been a professor of neurosurgery at the school of medicine and director of the Endovascular Surgery Program of this institution. He also leads the same program at ASEM Stroke Medical Center. In addition, Rodríguez-Mercado has served as director of the Fellows Training Program in Neuroendovascular Surgery since 2001.

Rodríguez-Mercado is a member of 15 prestigious international medical societies. He has participated in multiple scientific research projects and given more than 140 oral presentations in Puerto Rico, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Spain, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Portugal, the Dominican Republic, Uruguay, and Venezuela. In addition, Rodríguez-Mercado has lectured outside of Puerto Rico on 80 occasions. He is author and co-author of 25 scientific articles in prestigious journals, such as *Neurosurgery*, *Stroke*, and the *American Journal of Neuroradiology*. Rodríguez-Mercado has written chapters in three health books.

Rodríguez-Mercado was born in 1961 in Ponce. He obtained a bachelor's degree in chemistry at the University of Puerto Rico (UPR), Río Piedras Campus, and a doctorate in medicine at the School of Medicine of the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus, with a specialty in neurosurgery. He obtained a subspecialty in endovascular neurosurgery at New York University.

Rodríguez-Mercado is a colonel of the Medical Reserve of the United States Army, to which he has belonged since 1988. Since 2002, he has worked as a neurosurgeon at Walter Reed Medical. In addition, in 2005, he joined the Brook Army Medical Center. Rodríguez-Mercado's endovascular surgery program is recognized worldwide. In January 2017, Gov. Ricardo Rossello Nevares appointed Rodríguez-Mercado as secretary of health of the Puerto Rico Department of Health.

Rodríguez-Mercado is married to Wanda Santiago-Pimentel, a medical technologist. He is the proud father of Rafael Alejandro, a university student.