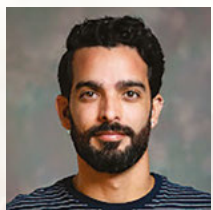




The Adventures of Meg A. Mole, Future Chemist



Dr. Eduardo J. Caro-Diaz
Assistant Professor,
School of Pharmacy

In honor of this year's Chemists Celebrate Earth Week (CCEW) theme, "The Curious Chemistry of Amazing Algae," I traveled all the way to the University of Puerto Rico—Medical Sciences Campus, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. There I met with Dr. Eduardo J. Caro-Diaz, Assistant Professor at the School of Pharmacy.

Dr. Caro-Diaz's research is in medicinal chemistry of natural marine products. "I collect algae in the ocean," he told me, "and bring them back to the lab to find new medicine-like molecules." He said he does most of his work on the computer, inside a laboratory. "In addition, we sometimes visit the ocean to collect samples, or travel to share our work with other scientists."

Dr. Caro-Diaz also works with students, which is what he enjoys most about his work. "Teaching and training science students is a very rewarding experience," he shared. "I also like that I get to do a lot of experiments." He told me that the best thing about being a scientist is "learning everyday about interesting things. Every day is different, with new challenges—and I really enjoy solving problems."



Growing up, Dr. Caro-Diaz was very interested in science. "From a very early age, I really liked math and science. I especially liked learning about nature," he explained. He shared a special memory of an experiment he conducted when he was in 2nd grade that involved growing bean plants in different light conditions, which is when he started to learn about photosynthesis. "I also used to love solving puzzles and riddles," he recalled, "and enjoyed my middle school chemistry laboratory the most."

Dr. Caro-Diaz had great support from his teachers and family. "I had fantastic teachers who were very supportive of my interest in science. My parents also had a big influence (my dad is a mathematician)." He also mentioned to me how thankful he was for his high school chemistry teacher, who "encouraged me to think about studying chemistry, since it was a subject I naturally liked and understood. 'Thanks, Mrs. Maldonado!'" he added with a big smile.

Thank you, Dr. Caro-Diaz for the wonderful tour of your lab and teaching me all about amazing algae. And a huge thank-you to all of the teachers, like Mrs. Maldonado, who inspire children to become chemists!

Fun Facts

- **Favorite pastime/hobby:** Surfing and climbing
- **Favorite color:** All shades of sea blue
- **Very interesting project you were a part of:** Looking for COVID-19 medicines in algae
- **Accomplishment you are proud of:** Building our lab at the University of Puerto Rico