



The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network

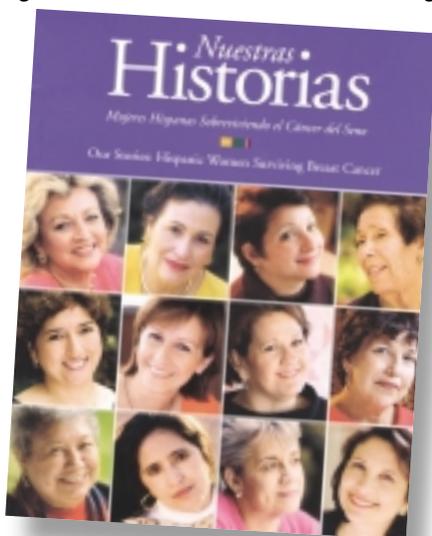
[www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org)

Fall 2004 Vol. 5, No. 2

## New book relates Latina breast cancer experience

**A**mong Latina women, breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer and the number one cancer killer. In a new book produced by *Redes En Acción*, 26 South Texas women who have fought this deadly disease describe the Latina breast cancer experience in their own words.

The book, *Nuestras Historias: Mujeres Hispanas Sobreviviendo el Cáncer del Seno* (Our Stories: Hispanic Women Surviving Breast Cancer), is a 114-page, full-color publication presented in both English and Spanish. Through the stories of the women, the book relates the influence of the Hispanic/Latino culture on the breast cancer experience and on the



For information about dissemination of *Nuestras Historias*, please visit the *Redes En Acción* Web site at [www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org)

coping skills used by many of the Latina women in battling the disease.

"One of the threads that you see running throughout these stories is the amazing resiliency of these Latinas as they cope with a disease that is having a devastating impact not only on their own lives but on the lives of their families and loved ones," notes Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator and Professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine. Dr. Ramirez is also the Associate Director of Community Research for the San Antonio Cancer Institute (SACI).

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## Inside



Anyone who has followed the activities of *Redes En Acción* through this newsletter over the past five years is aware of the emphasis the initiative places on role models in the Latino community. In

each issue we profile individuals who, on a day-to-day basis, positively impact the fields of cancer research, training and awareness.

This issue of the *Redes Report* is no exception. We describe the achievements of Dr. Ernesto Sebrie, an Argentine post-doctoral fellow at the University of California, San Francisco who has worked diligently to curb "the tobacco epidemic" in his home country. We follow the career of Dr. Carlos Sanchez, a native of Peru, who is pursuing his dream as a researcher in Chicago, Illinois.

We focus attention on Lynn Beltran, who put her ideas into action in launching an innovative model health promotion and education program called the Latina Breast Health Project in Salt Lake City, Utah. We discuss the impressive clinical research of Dr. Lisa Flowers, an Atlanta, Georgia, physician and 2004 Fellow for the National Hispanic Medical Association's Leadership Fellowship Program.

In addition to these features describing the work of Latino professionals in their respective cancer fields, this issue also spotlights the inspirational impact of "regular people" in the Latino community — the South Texas breast cancer survivors who shared their experiences in a new book produced by *Redes En Acción*. You can read about these courageous Latina role models in our lead story on *Nuestras Historias: Mujeres Hispanas Sobreviviendo el Cáncer del Seno / Our Stories: Hispanic Women Surviving Breast Cancer*.

Enjoy!

**Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH**  
Principal Investigator  
*Redes En Acción*

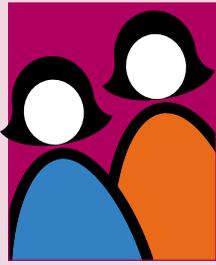


Survivors who shared their stories in *Nuestras Historias* gather for a book unveiling ceremony.

*Redes En Acción*: The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network is a major Special Populations Networks initiative supported by the National Cancer Institute.

The primary purpose is to create a national and regional infrastructure for collaboration among grassroots leaders, local communities, researchers and public health professionals to stimulate cancer control research, training and awareness. Through network activities, *Redes En Acción* is establishing training and research opportunities for Latino students and researchers, generating research projects on key cancer issues impacting Latinos and supporting cancer awareness activities.

The *Redes Report* is produced quarterly by *Redes En Acción*: The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network, NCI Grant No. UO 1 CA 86117-01



# TRAINING

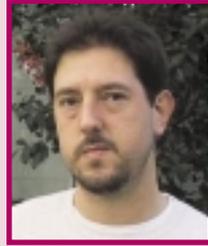
## Studying smoking

**Ernesto M. Sebrie, MD, MPH**  
San Francisco, California

Dr. Ernesto Sebrie credits his training experiences with *Redes En Acción* and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Minority Training Program in Cancer Control Research with helping him develop knowledge and skills necessary to conduct cancer and tobacco control research in a multidisciplinary environment.

Dr. Sebrie took his interest in “the tobacco epidemic,” fostered during pursuit of his Master’s of Public Health degree at the University of California, Berkeley, to a new level during his Minority Training Program internship under the mentorship of *Redes En Acción* researchers Drs. Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable and Celia Kaplan. He participated with the investigators in a collaborative research project between UCSF and the National University of Jujuy, Argentina, which is assessing the prevalence of smoking behavior among Argentinean youth and identifying the patterns of transition from smoking susceptibility to initiation to experimentation to regular smoking.

Also, in the course of his *Redes En Acción* internship, Dr. Sebrie worked with Drs. Stanton Glantz and Joaquín Barnoya of the



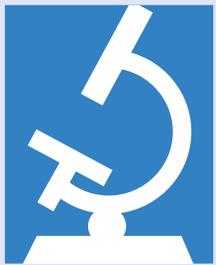
UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education in a study examining the role of the tobacco industry in undermining tobacco control legislation in Argentina. The South American country is near and dear to Dr. Sebrie, who was born and raised in Rosario, Argentina, where he obtained his MD and postgraduate training in epidemiology.

For the tobacco industry project, he searched the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library at UCSF and Argentinean newspapers and magazines, and conducted interviews with Congressmen, the Minister of Health, anti-tobacco advocates and public health officials in Buenos Aires. He is reporting his research findings in a peer-reviewed paper in the journal *Tobacco Control*.

Although smoking prevalence in Argentina is among the highest in Latin America (40.4% in adults), Dr. Sebrie is optimistic about tobacco control there. “Tobacco control is being included in the agenda of the current government of Argentina, secondhand smoke is a topic of discussion among the general population in the biggest cities, and there are some indications that social tolerance about smoking is starting to diminish,” he says. “All of these factors are key when we think about intervention strategies.”

Dr. Sebrie is currently a post-doctoral fellow with the UCSF Department of General Internal Medicine, the NIH Fogarty International Tobacco and Health Research and Capacity Building Program, and the UCSF Center for Tobacco Control Research and Education. He plans to pursue a PhD in epidemiology to conduct cancer and tobacco control research focused on minority and underserved populations.

Contributed by: **Martha Rangel-Lugo, PhD**  
*Redes En Acción* Coordinator  
San Francisco, California



# RESEARCH

## Following a dream

**Carlos M. Sanchez, MD**  
Chicago, Illinois

After 26 years practicing medicine in his native Peru, Dr. Carlos Sanchez is realizing his dream as a researcher in the United States. The physician, who came to this country two years ago, is a junior fellow at the University of Illinois, Jane Addams College of Social Work, Midwest Latino Health Research, Training and Policy Center.

The knowledge he gained over the years as a doctor in an impoverished Peruvian neighborhood has helped lay a foundation for his research aspirations. “Issues like pollution, seasonal jobs, immigration, language and segregation are common,” he notes. “As in the United States, infectious and chronic diseases disproportionately affect the poor.”

Before his immigration, Dr. Sanchez was also Assistant Professor at the College of Health Sciences and Medicine at the



San Pedro-Chimbote University, where he first discovered an interest in research.

“By leading programs on cervical and breast cancer, prenatal care, family planning, reproductive health and menopause, I realized that innovative interventions needed to be developed, implemented and evaluated,” he says, adding that, unfortunately, research support was minimal. “In my new position at the University of Illinois, I have discovered that my dreams may become true and all the experience and information that I have accumulated from years of practice are useful and needed for the Latino population in the United States.”

One of his research areas is poor Latino participation in cancer clinical trials. In addition to addressing the financial, cultural and system barriers experienced by patients, he says, it is also important to educate physicians about their role and to develop strategies to increase collaboration and communication between primary care physicians and academic institutions.

Earlier this year, Dr. Sanchez presented preliminary findings from his study on *Attitudes, Beliefs, and Other Barriers to Participation of Latino Cancer Survivors in Clinical Trials* at the Intercultural Cancer Council’s Biennial Symposium on Minorities, the Medically Underserved & Cancer.

Contributed by: **Catalina Ramos-Hernandez, MD**  
*Redes En Acción* Advisory Committee Member  
Chicago, Illinois



# AWARENESS

## Launching a program

**Lynn Beltran**  
*Salt Lake City, Utah*

In her young career, Lynn Beltran has already made a tremendous impact in her community through her devotion to promoting early breast and cervical cancer screening. The Latina Breast Health Project, which she started only three years ago in Utah's Salt Lake County, was cited as a national template for outreaching to Latina women at last year's Annual Avon Breast Care Conference.

Lynn's dedication to her work is obvious: "Since I started working with the program 3½ years ago, cancer instantly became my passion," she says.

After receiving her Bachelor's Degree in Community Health Education from San Diego State University, she began her career as a health educator in the Salt Lake Valley Health Department. Although she enjoyed her work, Lynn felt that she wasn't devoting



sufficient time to the Latino population to successfully effect change.

"I realized that I would need to develop an effective program from the ground up...to really impact the breast health of Latina women in Salt Lake County," she recalls.

She put her ideas into action and developed the Latina Breast Health Project, which has grown and thrived. At this year's *Redes En Acción* Southwest Regional Conference, Lynn and two of the project's Community Health Advisors were recognized for their outstanding contribution to cancer awareness and outreach.

"The role of outreach workers is incredibly important as navigators within the health care system," Lynn says. "They are truly the heart and soul of this project."

To establish a successful health promotion and education project requires in-depth knowledge of the community and effective methods of reaching the audience with the program's message, she says.

"Make sure that the project is multi-faceted, not just education through one source but through many sources," she advises. "Remember that the Latino community is very diverse and what works for one group does not always work for another."

Contributed by: **Ana Talavera**, MPH  
*Redes En Acción* Coordinator  
San Diego, California

## Promoting cancer control in Puerto Rico

With the recent Comprehensive Cancer Control Leadership Institute (CCCLI) in San Juan, Puerto Rico is a step closer to developing a comprehensive cancer control plan.

The Leadership Institute was coordinated by the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service (CIS), in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Division of Cancer Prevention and Control, American Cancer Society (ACS), and other national and local organizations.

The CCCLI, which elicited island-wide participation, provided a strategic opportunity for a group of highly skilled, influential individuals to engage in collective action and formulate a mechanism to develop a comprehensive cancer control plan for Puerto Rico. During the two-day summit, participants defined a vision for a comprehensive approach to cancer prevention and control in the territory and employed various strategies and tools to help establish an action agenda.

The significant growth of cancer prevention and control programs nationally and in Puerto Rico has resulted in recognizing that improved coordination of cancer control activities is essential to maximizing resources and achieving desired cancer health outcomes. At the CCCLI meeting, 18 of Puerto Rico's most influential leaders in cancer control set the wheels in motion for an integrated approach to cancer control for the island.

CIS and the Intercultural Cancer Council began to build the momentum for comprehensive cancer control last year with the first island-wide educational forum, "Comprehensive Cancer Control in Puerto Rico: Challenges and Opportunities." The forum brought Puerto Rico's cancer experts, health care professionals, survivors, advocates and providers together with cancer experts



**A PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE**  
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from the mainland to initiate a coordinated approach to comprehensive cancer control in Puerto Rico.

Attending last year's conference were more than 140 participants, representing diverse stakeholders from all regions of the island. The two-day forum featured more than 20 regional and national experts discussing various aspects of cancer control, including cancer in Latino populations in the U.S., cancer control in Puerto Rico, innovative programs that reach Latinos, advocacy and cancer, reducing health disparities, building community-based partnerships, and cancer prevention in the 21st century.

Building on the momentum generated by that initial meeting, this year's Leadership Institute worked to enhance and strengthen partnerships among influential leaders in cancer control to develop strategies and mechanisms that address duplication of efforts among existing cancer control and prevention programs.

# NHMA News

## Promoting community-based research

The National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) has called on Congress to provide more community-based research on Latinos and to support programs that increase representation of Hispanics in clinical trials.

"If we are going to look at the future of health care in this country, we can no longer afford to take a wide, mainstream approach," said Dr. Elena Rios, NHMA President and CEO. "As the Hispanic population surges, we have to develop research on Hispanics and include more minorities in patient studies if we are to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health and improve our nation's health."

The third in a series of NHMA Hispanic health Congressional briefings, titled "Racial/Ethnic Disparities and Community-Based Research," was sponsored by NHMA, which represents Hispanic doctors in the United States, and The California Endowment, a statewide private health foundation. The Endowment was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians.

Speakers at the briefing included Rep. Donna Christian-Christensen (D-VI), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Health Brain Trust; Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CA); and Rep.

Jesse Jackson Jr. (D-IL), who called on the public to inform their Congressmen about joining NHMA and increase awareness of what works to increase health research in our communities of color.

More training opportunities for Latinos should be a priority, emphasized Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator. "Hispanic researchers are more sensitive to and understand the problems that face Hispanics," said Dr. Ramirez, who addressed the audience about *Redes En Acción*, a model for Hispanic research initiatives, and future research strategies that can eliminate health disparities.

Also speaking was Dr. Jo Ivey Boufford, Chair of the Institute of Medicine's report on "The Future of the Public's Health" and a professor at the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service at New York University. "Community-based research is critical to eliminating health disparities, because until we know the underlying causes of this problem we can't remedy them and move forward," she said.

At the briefing, NHMA also called on Congress to support bills by Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN), Sen. Tom Daschle (D-SD) and Rep. Elijah E. Cummings (D-MD). The bills, which seek to eliminate Hispanic health disparities, call for providing community-based Hispanic health research.

"With funding for research," Dr. Rios noted, "we can help more Hispanics become researchers to better understand a growing segment of the American fabric. That's a good investment for all Americans."



## Taking a proactive approach to cancer

Lisa C. Flowers, MD, FACOG

Atlanta, Georgia



Sufficient support in the clinical setting in terms of culturally competent professionals, adequate interpreting services and follow-up are necessary but insufficient for the successful treatment of Latina cancer patients. That's the assessment of Dr. Lisa Flowers, Director of Colposcopy Service at Grady Memorial Hospital and a clinical researcher and Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at Emory University School of Medicine.

"Over half of the patients that I treat are Latina, and most of them present with high-grade, pre-invasive cervical disease and have never had prior cancer screening," notes Dr. Flowers, Emory's first Latino Avon Breast Cancer Scholar. According to the physician, cancer screening for Latinas requires a proactive approach that involves education, health literacy and empowerment. And more should be done to recruit Latina women into clinical trials.

"Latinas are eager and willing," she says. "Although faced with many social, cultural and financial barriers to participating in cervical cancer research studies, they are extremely responsive to entering into these studies, because they want to give back to the community, to the point where they will

participate without compensation just to get answers."

Dr. Flowers's research focuses on investigating genetic alterations in lower genital tract malignancies and evaluating the immune response to cervical dysplasia and human papillomavirus (HPV). She is Principal Investigator (PI) of a National Cancer Institute (NCI) grant studying mechanisms for breast and cervical cancer incidence disparities.

In addition, she is PI for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Collaboration/NCI Early Detection Research Network looking for molecular markers identifying patients at risk for cervical disease, and she's a clinician collaborator for a CDC project testing the efficacy of topical microbicides for the prevention of sexual transmission of HIV. As a personal research goal, Dr. Flowers would like to initiate a clinical trial using herbal treatment to delay the need for an excision procedure, which can lead to increased morbidity due to disease recurrence and the need for repeated surgeries.

Dr. Flowers is a 2004 Fellow for the National Hispanic Medical Association's Leadership Fellowship Program, in which she and a team of NHMA fellows will develop policy recommendations on how to develop a U.S.-Mexico binational health insurance program.

As Vice President of Medical Affairs for *Día de La Mujer Latina, Inc.* (DML) (which is directed by Venus Gines, a *Redes*

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# NOTICIAS

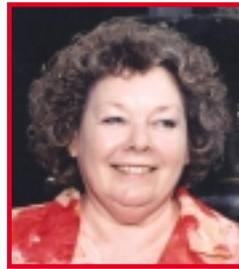
## Around Redes

The *Redes En Acción* Southwest Regional Network Center, coordinated at San Diego State University, took its annual Regional Community Advisory Committee (RCAC) Meeting on the road this year – to the University of Utah’s Huntsman Cancer Institute in Salt Lake City. The 48 participants in the two-day meeting, sponsored in collaboration with the National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco Prevention, included representatives from the Cancer Information Service’s Rocky Mountain Region, the Utah Tobacco Prevention and Control program and various Southwest universities, allied health organizations and agencies.

The RCAC meeting, which has been conducted in San Diego in previous years,

took place in Utah to spotlight programs and personnel working with the growing Latino population in the Rocky Mountain region. The conference also gave advisory committee members in Utah an opportunity to build partnerships and network with others from throughout the region.

Panel discussions included “Recruiting Latinos for Cancer Clinical Trials,” “Engaging Latino Communities in the Future of Genetics,” “Tobacco Control and Prevention,” “Health Care Delivery in the Community Health Center System,” and “Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs Related to Colorectal Cancer and Colorectal Cancer Screening.”



**S**haron Kay Haverlah, Lead Project Coordinator in the *Redes En Acción* National Network Center, was honored with a

Community Health Research Resource Award from the NCI’s Special Populations Networks for Cancer Awareness, Research and Training (SPN). The four Cancer Information Service offices of Coastal, New York, South Central and Northern California also received SPN awards for community partnership. The honors were announced at the Cancer Health Disparities Summit 2004 presented by the NCI Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities.

**M**artha Medrano, MD, MPH, *Redes En Acción* South Central Region Co-Principal Investigator, received the 2004 Medical School Distinguished Alumnus Award from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. She is Assistant Dean for Continuing Medical Education and Director of the School of Medicine’s Hispanic Center of Excellence. Dr. Medrano, who graduated from the UTHSCSA School of Medicine in 1981, was presented the award at the school’s spring commencement.

## New book relates Latina breast cancer experience

Continued from page 1

The women’s stories reflect this resilience and resolve not only in fighting the disease, but also in confronting the numerous accompanying issues – fear, depression, financial worries, and the possibility of leaving loved ones behind. Coping skills employed in this day-to-day battle included prayer and faith, as well as reliance on tools such as humor, music, books, dance – even family pets.

The stories include practical advice, such as the importance of regular screening, the value of perseverance and

education, and the assistance available through local organizations that provide support and help guide patients through the health care system.

*Nuestras Historias* serves a dual purpose – inspirational and educational – and will be provided free to Latina women diagnosed with breast cancer through area organizations such as the San Antonio Affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Alamo Breast Cancer Foundation (ABCF), American Cancer Society (ACS), and Women

Involved in Nurturing, Giving and Sharing (WINGS).

Publication of *Nuestras Historias* was supported by grants from SACI, the San Antonio Affiliate of the Komen Foundation and the Lance Armstrong Foundation. SACI is a National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center and represents the combined cancer research programs of the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and the Cancer Therapy and Research Center.

## Taking a proactive approach to cancer

Continued from page 4

*En Acción* National Steering Committee member), Dr. Flowers focuses her health care efforts on Latinas across the U.S. who are unable to receive medical screening for cervical and breast disease. The mission of DML is to promote health awareness to the underserved Latino community by providing ethnic-specific education; a culturally specific setting for early detection, screening and prevention; and patient navigation for

follow-up services.

Dr. Flowers strongly encourages students to pursue careers in cancer research. She contends that the demands for health care, especially from the Latino community, are considerable, and there is a great need for more services provided by culturally sensitive professionals. For those already pursuing careers in cancer research, she recommends that medical students,

residents and fellows have multiple research mentors.

“Having many mentors provides new researchers with a broad array of perspectives and, ultimately, can change the focus of one’s research, career goals and priorities,” she says.

Contributed by: **Elizabeth Collins**  
National Hispanic Medical Association

# 16 *Redes* pilot projects total \$800K in funding

Five pilot projects were approved for funding through *Redes En Acción* in the final round of National Cancer Institute reviews, bringing the total of pilot studies to 16 over the past five years. Funding for the pilot projects totaled \$800,000.

The latest research projects, spread over five *Redes En Acción* regions, include pilot studies focusing on several cancer types and issues, including cervical and breast cancers, Latina clinical trial participation, and perceptions of genetic testing.

The most recent pilot projects approved by NCI are as follows:

- ▶ *The Natural History of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Infection in Aging Women*; Principal Investigator (PI) Concepción Diaz-Arrastia, MD, of the South Central Regional Network Center (RNC)
- ▶ *Mammographic Breast Density as a Risk Factor for Breast Cancer*; PI Elad Ziv, MD, Northwest RNC
- ▶ *Increasing Hispanic Enrollment in Gynecologic Cancer Prevention Trials: A Linguistically Competent Approach*; PI Francisco Garcia, MD, of the Southwest RNC
- ▶ *Surgical Cultural Competency Cancer Education Program*; PI Debbie Salas-Lopez, MD, of the Northeast RNC
- ▶ *Latinas' Perception of Genetic Testing on Breast and Ovarian Cancer*; PI Carlos Sandoval-Cros, MD, of the Southeast RNC

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