



The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network

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

Spring 2004 Vol. 5, No. 1

## New report ranks top cancer issues for Latinos

Inadequate access to cancer screening and care is the number one cancer issue for the nation's 38 million Hispanics/Latinos, according to a report recently issued by *Redes En Acción*.

In its summary recommendations for a national Hispanic/Latino cancer control agenda, the *Redes En Acción Latino Cancer Report* ranks the cancer issues of greatest relevance to this country's Latino population as follows:

- 1) Access to cancer screening and care
- 2) Tobacco use and cancer
- 3) Status and communication of cancer risk
- 4) Association of infectious agents with certain types of cancer
- 5) Cancer survivorship and health-related quality of life

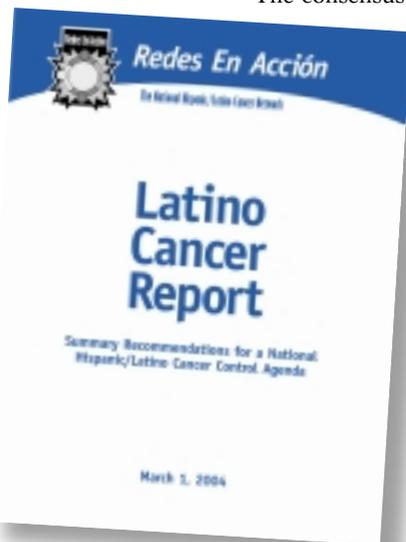
Access to care is a particularly significant problem for Latinos. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Latinos are uninsured at a rate more than three times higher than non-Hispanic whites (32.4% vs. 10.7%).

The *Latino Cancer Report* includes a series of research recommendations for the priority issues, as well as education, training and outreach recommendations for cancer prevention and control. In addition, the report lists the most important cancer sites,

in order of their significance to Latinos, as: 1) breast, 2) cervical, 3) lung, 4) colorectal, 5) prostate, 6) liver and 7) stomach.

"The consensus recommendations found in the Latino Cancer Report are intended to help shape a national agenda on Hispanic/Latino cancer prevention and control issues," said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator. "More specifically, the aim of this report is to assist *Redes En Acción* in its goals of promoting Hispanic/Latino cancer research, training and public education, as well as provide advisory guidelines for national, regional and local policy makers."

The *Latino Cancer Report* represents four years of research and prioritization and the input of hundreds of scientists, health care professionals, leaders of government agencies and professional and community-based organizations, and other stakeholders in Hispanic/Latino health. The process included extensive involvement of *Redes En Acción's* National Steering Committee and six Regional Community Advisory Committees, and a survey of 624 key opinion leaders in Hispanic/Latino communities throughout the country.



For a copy of the Latino Cancer Report, visit our web site at [www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org).

## Inside



*Redes En Acción* reached another major milestone recently when we issued our *Latino Cancer Report: Summary Recommendations for a National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Control Agenda*.

As those of you who were part of the process can attest, prioritizing the issues of greatest significance to this country's 38 million Latinos and developing research, education, training and outreach recommendations weren't easy tasks. In fact, development of this report actually began with our first *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee meeting four years ago.

Thanks to the participation and input of hundreds of dedicated individuals around the country, the *Latino Cancer Report* is finally a reality — and you can read about it and learn how to obtain a copy in our lead story.

The report isn't the only new Latino cancer-related publication we have to tell you about in this issue. In fact, *Redes En Acción* and our friends and colleagues have been busy producing print materials of interest to the public and the research community. In this issue you can find descriptions of the following:

- *Communities in Action/En Acción: Targeting Latino Cancer Health Disparities*, which highlights *Redes En Acción's* impact in the community (page 5)
- *Cancer in U.S. Hispanics/Latinos, 1995-2000*, a monograph produced by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (page 4)
- *Celebre la Cocina Hispana: Healthy Hispanic Recipes*, a collection of recipes for healthy meals developed by the National Cancer Institute (page 3)
- *Buena Vida: Protecting Your Family from Breast Cancer*, a Komen Foundation-funded reprint of a publication produced by *Redes En Acción* researchers (page 4)

Happy reading!

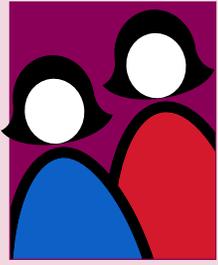
**Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH**  
Principal Investigator  
*Redes En Acción*

continued on page 5

*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

## Teaching translators

**Maria Cornelio, MA**  
*New York City, New York*

Latinos and other immigrant populations often experience language barriers that lead to poor health care. Maria Cornelio, Director of the Hispanic Research and Recruitment Center for the Columbia University Medical Center's Office of Clinical Trials, believes the absence of a professional medical translator can hamper an institution's ability to accurately communicate health information to a patient.

"Some decision makers have the misconception that simply being bilingual qualifies someone to provide translation or interpretation services," she says. "That is absolutely not the case." Competent translation and interpretation require linguistic ability, specialized knowledge of the field, familiarity with the target audience and understanding the purpose of the translation, she emphasizes.

With these four skill sets in mind, Maria designs medical translation courses and teaches bilingual individuals the basic skills

necessary to translate medical documents. She also provides professional translators with advanced training that focuses on the finer points of medical translation.

As an émigré of the Dominican Republic at age 11, struggling with the English language served to fuel Maria's interest in languages and other cultures. She found her niche in health care right out of high school, when she started working for an international health services firm, and eventually sought her Master's Degree in International Studies. A passion for languages,

fostered by years of study and strong family support, has helped make her an expert in the field.

"Right now in the U.S., unlike many other countries, anyone who speaks two languages can call themselves a medical translator or interpreter – even without formal training," says Maria. "But substandard translations and interpretations can ultimately jeopardize a patient's health, or even their life."



She suggests that colleges and universities can help close this gap by incorporating translation instruction into their curricula. For mentors and trainers in this field, Maria advises, "The most important thing is to believe in your students, demand the best from them, and create a supportive environment in which the students are eager to learn."

Contributed by: **Evelyn Rojas, MSSW**  
*Redes En Acción/CIS Partnership Program Coordinator*



# RESEARCH

## Scientist and educator

**Diana Lopez, PhD, MS**  
*Miami, Florida*

Dr. Diana Lopez is devoted to her research. Indeed, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has funded one of her research grants for the past quarter century. Dr. Lopez is Professor of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Miami School of Medicine and Program Leader of the Department of Tumor Immunology at the Sylvester Cancer Center.

A researcher at heart, she is also an educator who enjoys sharing her experience and knowledge with students. "Research is captivating for me because you never know what you will find along the way," says Dr. Lopez, who also began teaching microbiology to undergraduate students again this year. "It's fascinating to instill the enthusiasm to young people and watch them become inspired."

It was probably her commitment to cancer research that caught the eye of NCI Director Dr. Andrew C. von Eschenbach last year when he appointed the Progress Review Group to Eliminate Cancer Health Disparities. Dr. Lopez and Dr. Moon S. Chen, Jr., of the University of California Davis School of Medicine and Medical Center, were named Co-Chairs of the group.

"It was a very big surprise when I received the call from Dr. von Eschenbach," recalls Dr. Lopez. "I was very busy at the time, had lots of projects, but he's very persuasive, and I think he is truly committed to eliminating cancer health disparities."

She is proud to be part of such a noble cause. By integrating all agencies of the Department of Health and Human Services, the group must seek new avenues to eliminate health disparities in cancer awareness, prevention, early detection, incidence and treatment across the nation.

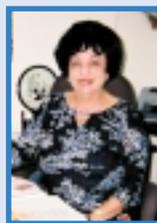
Dr. Lopez, who was born in Havana, Cuba, obtained her first doctoral degree in Natural Sciences from the University of Havana in 1960. After immigrating to the United States, she received her MS (1968) and PhD (1970) in Microbiology, both from the University of Miami. She gives much of the credit for her accomplishments to her family: her husband and three children.

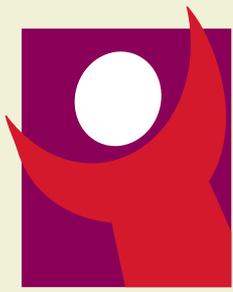
One of the research projects Dr. Lopez cherishes the most is on Cell Mediated Immunity in Mouse Mammary Tumor Models, which has been funded for 25 years. Her ultimate goal is to see results of the study applied in clinical settings to benefit as many patients as possible. This is one of the reasons she's motivated to continue research.

Where else does Dr. Lopez find her rewards? From watching her students achieve excellence in their fields and receive recognition for their hard work.

"I always tell them that in research you can be hardheaded about what you're trying to find," she says. "If the results are not what you wanted or expected, you must work with the changes, grasp the opportunity and see where it takes you."

Contributed by: **Martha Oliveros**  
*CIS Coordinator, Redes En Acción Southeast Region*





# AWARENESS

## A virtual clínica

**Claudia Barajas**  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

When Claudia Barajas started working for the Latino Community Development Agency (LCDA) in Oklahoma for Our Families Program eight years ago, she had no way of knowing the future impact she would have on the health of Latina women in her community.

Two years after she began, a health educator for the Take Charge! Program of the Oklahoma State Department of Health and City County Health Department contacted LCDA Executive Director Pat Fennell to explore a collaboration to provide breast and cervical cancer screening services for underserved, uninsured Hispanic women 40 years and older.

“Mrs. Fennell assigned me to this task and I decided to take this challenge as a volunteer to help the community,” Claudia recalls, “and with the help of all volunteer staff, nurses, translators and LCDA staff, by May 1997 the clinic (*Clínica de la Mujer Latina*) was created.”

The enthusiasm of the partnership spread to other organizations and leaders in the community. By 1999 the partnership grew to



include the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Avon Foundation Breast Care Fund, Project Women Coalition Inc., Sprint PCS, and Women of the South. With their support, the clinic now can outreach and offer breast and cervical cancer screening services to 470 Hispanic women per year, as well as train and pay clinic staff.

To Claudia, this is an innovative virtual clinic, which is coordinated from her home. One or two days per month, clients go to the LCDA Clínica la Amistad, where screenings are provided.

The mobile mammography van is on site to provide one-stop screening, providing no-cost mammograms as well as clinical services for cervical and clinical breast examinations. Culturally sensitive interpreters facilitate communication between medical staff and patients.

Since 98 percent of the women receiving services are Spanish speakers, the most successful way to promote clinic services has been “*La Zeta*,” the Spanish-language radio station, which has aired public service announcements and commercials. Spanish-language newspapers also have helped by running breast and cervical cancer educational articles. In addition, Claudia promotes the program through community and faith-based organizations, health fairs, community events and within the LCDA programs.

“Sometimes it’s not what you can get from your community that’s important, but what you can do for your community,” she says. “This is an emotionally rewarding experience for me. I am just grateful for all of the support we have received from everyone involved – without them we would not be here today.”

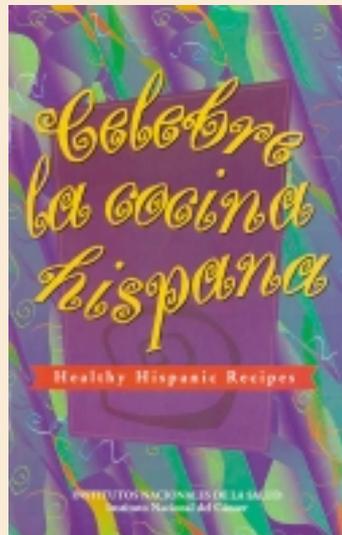
Contributed by: **Sylvia Z. Castillo**  
*Redes En Acción* Regional Coordinator  
San Antonio, Texas

## Healthy Hispanic recipes featured in NCI booklet

At a time when almost two-thirds of Americans are considered overweight or obese, scientists have assembled compelling evidence that weighing too much, as well as maintaining low levels of physical activity, increases the risk of developing cancer. It is estimated that the overweight and obese population in the United States accounts for 14 percent of all cancer deaths in men and 20 percent in women, or more than 94,000 deaths each year.

Scientists have identified obesity and sedentary lifestyle as two important and modifiable risk factors for cancer. Investigators are examining the relationship between cancer and the independent and combined effects of reduced energy intake (caloric restriction), various components of diet (e.g., carbohydrates, protein, fat), specific foods, micronutrients, food preparation methods, and types and intensity of physical activity.

One National Cancer Institute (NCI) resource designed specifically to target the issue of diet within the Hispanic/Latino community is *Celebre la Cocina Hispana: Healthy Hispanic Recipes*. This booklet offers a set of bilingual recipes highlighting the importance of healthy eating habits by cooking meals that are lower in fat and higher in fiber.



The publication features 18 recipes from Latin American countries and the Caribbean, and provides alternatives to traditional Hispanic-meal ingredients by using fruits and vegetables and less fat. Although fat is necessary for many bodily functions, most people – including children – consume more than they need.

From Venezuelan *arepas* to Salvadoran *pupusas* to Nicaraguan chicken *tamales* with all the extras to Panamanian plantain cereal, *Celebre la Cocina Hispana* provides delicious, healthy recipes – many of which can also satisfy a vegetarian diet. The ingredients can easily be found in the fruit and vegetable aisle of local supermarkets and in Latino specialty food stores.

Copies of *Celebre la Cocina Hispana* can be obtained by calling the NCI’s Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER. NCI also offers *Coma Menos Grasa* (Eat Less Fat), which recommends various ways to reduce fat and possibly lower the chances of developing many types of cancer. Ask an Information Specialist about other NCI resources that address diet and obesity.



# Cervical cancer issues reflect 'pressing need'

**Concepción Diaz-Arrastia, MD**  
*Galveston, Texas*

The under-representation of Hispanic women in cervical cancer clinical trials, research and screening represents a challenge for the health care community to address to better understand the needs of Latina women, according to Dr. Concepción Diaz-Arrastia.

"Hispanic women suffer cervical cancer at twice the rate of the general population," she notes, "and this demonstrates the pressing need to understand the medical and cultural factors involved in cervical carcinogenesis, as well as the barriers to cancer screening and early diagnosis."

Since 1996, Dr. Diaz-Arrastia has been a gynecologic oncologist in the Division of Gynecologic Oncology of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, and her work has focused on clinical research, resident teaching and direct patient care. Her academic interests are centered on cervical neoplasia, and she has participated in the Gynecology Committee of the AIDS Clinical Trial Group, where she was active in development of the first gynecologic clinical trials in HIV-infected women with cervical dysplasia.

Dr. Diaz-Arrastia is also an active participant in the Gynecologic Oncology Group, recruiting patients to protocols and managing their treatment and follow-up under the protocols. Additionally, a pilot project studying the natural history of



human papillomavirus (HPV) infection in aging Latinas has recently been funded by the National Cancer Institute through *Redes En Acción*.

Upon receiving her medical degree from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Dr. Diaz-Arrastia continued to complete both a Residency in Obstetrics and Gynecology and a Fellowship in Gynecologic Oncology at the State University of New York (SUNY) Health Science Center at Brooklyn (Downstate Medical Center).

Her research goals include increasing participation of Latina women in cancer research and educating the Hispanic/Latino population about the benefits of clinical trials, such as exposure to cutting-edge therapies. She also promotes regular screening (many Latinas only obtain Pap smear testing as part of routine prenatal care or after childbearing has ended, she says).

As a mentor for medical school students and residents in obstetrics and gynecology, Dr. Diaz-Arrastia believes it is important to instill the desire to serve people with limited access to health care. She also feels that practitioners need to view building trust with the Latino community as a priority.

"Through building this trust, the Hispanic community can become aware that there are dedicated physicians whom they can count on for care, and Hispanics will proactively seek out medical care and practice preventive health care," she says.

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

## NOTICIAS Around Redes



**A**melie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator, has been awarded the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation's 2004 Cancer Prevention

Laurel for Dedication to Community Programs. The award recognizes her "outstanding work in early detection and prevention in the Hispanic/Latino community in Texas – and across the nation." Dr. Ramirez recently was promoted to Professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine, where she serves as Deputy Director of the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research

Center. The CRPF distinction was her second award in the past six months. Dr. Ramirez was also recently honored by the American Cancer Society, who selected her to receive the 2003 Humanitarian Award.

**A** new monograph providing the most current and comprehensive cancer incidence data available for the U.S. Hispanic/Latino population bears a *Redes En Acción* influence. The report, *Cancer in U.S. Hispanics/Latinos, 1995-2000*, was produced by the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries (NAACCR).

**Lucina Suarez**, PhD, Senior Scientist with the Texas Department of Health and a consultant for *Redes En Acción*, served on the panel of editors for the monograph. In addition, the cover page of the report is a letter from Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez and Dr. Suarez endorsing NAACCR's efforts, noting that the monograph represents "a promising step forward in providing a more complete picture of the cancer burden among U.S. Latinos."

Statistics in the monograph reflect the cancer experience of more than 86 percent of the U.S. Hispanic/Latino population. Included in the report are data from cancer registries in California, Florida, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, New York and several other states, as well as metropolitan areas such as Greater San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles, both in California.

**Dr. Holly Howe**, Executive Director of NAACCR and Co-Editor-in-Chief of the monograph, was a guest speaker at the 4th Annual *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee Meeting last August.

For more information about the monograph, contact NAACCR at 217-698-0800 or visit the Web site at [www.naacrr.org](http://www.naacrr.org).

Thanks to funding from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, the bilingual publication *Buena Vida: Protecting Your Family from Breast Cancer* has been reprinted. The publication, which provides information about breast cancer risks, screening and treatment, as well as resources available to the public, was produced by *Redes En Acción* researchers. Copies can be obtained by contacting the Komen Foundation at 1.877.SGK SHOP or through the Marketplace section of the Web site ([www.komen.org](http://www.komen.org)).

## Focus: *Redes* Co-Principal Investigator Frank Penedo

Frank J. Penedo, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator for the Southeast Region, is Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Miami.

### Briefly describe the primary project you're currently working on.

Most of my research time is devoted to an NCI-funded project that is evaluating the efficacy of a group-based psychosocial intervention in improving quality of life and physical health status among Spanish-monolingual men treated for early-stage prostate cancer. This study involves delivering a linguistically and culturally translated intervention that promotes use of efficacious social networks, and teaches adaptive coping strategies, stress management skills, and interpersonal skills such as assertiveness and anger management. Early findings suggest that similar to our non-Hispanic whites, our Spanish-monolingual men benefit from this intervention as evidenced by significant improvements in quality of life following participation in our groups.

### What are your major areas of research interest?

I am working on several studies designed to evaluate the role of psychosocial factors (e.g., stress, coping and personality) on disease progression in chronically ill older adults with a primary focus on cancer and HIV/AIDS. Specifically, I examine how these factors may promote or buffer disease processes via immune and



endocrine function. Because the aging process is characterized by marked changes in the immune and endocrine system that can render an individual vulnerable to disease, it is critical that we understand how psychosocial factors may further suppress immunity and the extent to which we can intervene and prevent these exacerbations.

### What do you consider your most notable achievement?

Aside from obtaining my Ph.D. in Clinical Health Psychology, I highly value the continued effort and dedication to my family despite the challenges she faced as a refugee, growing old outside of her beloved country, and dealing with a chronic illness fostered a great deal of respect and admiration for older adults and improving their quality of life.

### Who has inspired you most in your work – and why?

I would say my grandmother has had the greatest influence in my work. Her infinite wisdom and dedication to my family despite the challenges she faced as a refugee, growing old outside of her beloved country, and dealing with a chronic illness fostered a great deal of respect and admiration for older adults and improving their quality of life.

### What are the most important issues related to Latinos and cancer?

Access to health care continues to be a major barrier that we must overcome if we are to significantly improve the health of Hispanics/Latinos in the U.S. From a researcher's perspective, the lack of inclusion

of Hispanics/Latinos in clinical trials, including behavioral studies, continues to be of concern. Without adequate representation in research trials, it will be difficult to effectively address the health concerns of Hispanics/Latinos.

### How can awareness of cancer prevention, such as the importance of screening, be raised among Latinos?

I believe that through consistent and culturally sensitive bilingual messages utilizing multiple media channels, we can effectively raise cancer awareness among Hispanics/Latinos. We must make a greater effort at addressing how some cultural factors inherent in the Hispanic community may prevent or promote cancer awareness. For instance, we must dispel fatalistic attitudes (e.g., believing a cancer diagnosis implies a death sentence) that may prevent adequate cancer screening.

### What single piece of advice would you give a young Latino who aspires to a career in the cancer field?

Because so few Hispanics/Latinos are involved in clinical or research careers in cancer, the cancer field is one of many areas in which young aspiring Hispanics/Latinos can make a difference. There is a critical need for Hispanic/Latino expert researchers in the cancer field to effect change within the Hispanic population.

### What do you hope will be your legacy?

I hope that I can at least contribute in part to increasing cancer awareness and improving quality of life among Hispanics/Latinos impacted by cancer, and that I am one of hopefully many Hispanics who can make a meaningful contribution to this field.



## New report ranks top cancer issues for Latinos

Continued from page 1

"Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing minority population in the United States," Dr. Ramirez said. "As this population expands and ages, it is

imperative that the resources and strategies employed in the war against cancer be targeted as precisely as possible for maximum effect.

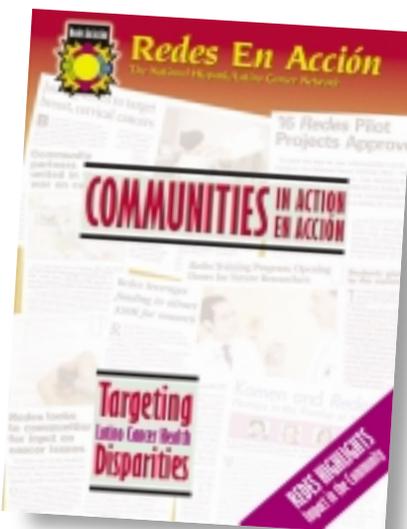
"*Redes En Acción* believes this Latino Cancer Report will provide a useful tool for all individuals and organizations engaged in this effort."

## Publication spotlights *Redes*' impact on Latino communities

### Did you know...

- Through the *Redes En Acción* initiative, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) has awarded \$900,000 in pilot project funding.
- *Redes En Acción*-related cancer research projects have surpassed \$20 million in leveraged funding from public and private sources.
- To date, 101 young Latinos have received training and/or mentorship from established cancer researchers through *Redes En Acción*.

These and many more examples of *Redes En Acción* accomplishments are included in a new publication that showcases the impact of the NCI's Special Populations Networks



initiative on Latino communities in its first four years of existence. The eight-page publication is titled *Communities in Action/En Acción: Targeting Latino Cancer Health Disparities*.

The print piece presents highlights of *Redes En Acción* history, including stories of the initiative's collaborative relationship with the NCI Cancer Information Service and Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, as well as the efforts of *Redes En Acción* researchers nationally and regionally to combat Latino tobacco use, promote breast and cervical cancer screening, and educate Latinos about participation in clinical trials.

*Communities in Action/En Acción* may be obtained by calling the *Redes En Acción* National Network Center at 210-348-0255, or visit the Web site at [www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org).

# NHMA clinical trials panel features *Redes* researchers

**R***edes En Acción* researchers teamed up to promote cancer research and Hispanic/Latino participation in clinical trials at the recent National Hispanic Medical Association 8th Annual Conference, which attracted almost 1,000 participants.

A panel presentation titled "Clinical Trials Participation among Hispanics/Latinos" was delivered by *Redes* Principal Investigator Dr. Amelie Ramirez and Co-PI's Drs. Gregory Talavera and Frank Penedo, with Dr. Jorge Gomez, Chief, Organ Systems Branch of the National Cancer Institute.

"The NHMA Annual Conference is attracting more new physicians and medical students interested in networking with the experts on Hispanic research and clinical care," said Dr. Elena Rios, NHMA Executive Director. "With the outstanding panelists from *Redes En Acción*, we were able to promote research careers in cancer and other diseases that impact Hispanics.

"We are proud to be working with *Redes En Acción* and all our partners who have raised the credibility of this event."

Panel speakers discussed various aspects of clinical trial recruitment among Hispanic/Latino populations in different regions of the country. Issues and strategies covered in the session included benefits, barriers, and current and planned recruitment programs for treatment and prevention trials.

Looking ahead to the next annual conference, the NHMA Hispanic Health Conference on Health Literacy is scheduled April 1-3, 2005 at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles. Visit [www.nhmamd.org](http://www.nhmamd.org) for more details.

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