



## The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network

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

Summer 2003 Vol. 4, No. 2

## Redes and CIS launch clinical trials project

**R**edes En Acción and the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service (CIS) have teamed up on a new community education project aimed at promoting cancer clinical trial awareness among the Hispanic/Latino population.

The six-month pilot project, Clinical Trials Outreach for Hispanics, is being implemented in four *Redes En Acción* regions that have existing CIS partnerships: New York, Florida, California and Texas. In those regional sites, *Redes En Acción* and CIS staff are delivering presentations during regularly scheduled professional, community and special-interest group meetings.

Based on the National Cancer Institute's

Clinical Trials Education Series (CTES), a 30-minute slide presentation included in the program's outreach module reflects specific needs and barriers confronted by Latinos. In addition to the slide presentation, in English and Spanish, the module includes talking points, a video, educational print materials for distribution and evaluation forms.

"We're looking closely at our methods and outcomes during this six-month pilot project to determine the most effective and efficient strategies for conducting clinical trials outreach," said Linda Civallero, CIS Partnership Program Manager. "After the pilot phase, we will revise the components

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## Inside



Here at the *Redes En Acción* National Network Center, it's been a busy summer for conference planning and implementation.

In June we coordinated a historic Hispanic/Latino Genetics Community Consultation Network summit meeting in Washington, DC. In attendance were more than 100 participants, the majority of which were Hispanic/Latino stakeholders in genetics issues, while the remainder represented federal agencies. It was the first time a body of this size and magnitude had ever gathered to discuss genetics issues specifically significant to the Hispanic/Latino population in United States.

Later in the summer, August 13-15, we will host the 4th Annual *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee Meeting in San Antonio, bringing together our distinguished group of advisers from organizations and institutions around the country. We have another full agenda, including the proposed development of research, training and awareness recommendations for the first *Redes En Acción* National Latino Cancer Report.

In addition to items about these two meetings, inside this issue you'll find more information about recent *Redes En Acción* activities. For example, on page 5 is a description of the new *Salud En Acción* web site focusing attention on the many Hispanic/Latino cancer programs and activities (including *Redes En Acción*) carried out by Baylor College of Medicine's Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center. And on page 6, you'll see an item on a new experimental cancer communication research vehicle, a *fotonovela* featuring popular Hispanic/Latino television actors.

Of course, there's much more inside, including several inspirational stories of Hispanic/Latino role models in the fields of cancer research, training and awareness.

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

### National Steering Committee schedules 4th annual meeting

Developing a National Latino Cancer Report focusing on future research, training and awareness recommendations will be the priority agenda item when the *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee (NSC) meets in August. The 4th Annual *Redes En Acción* NSC Meeting will take place in San Antonio August 13-15. Look for highlights of the meeting in the Fall issue of the *Redes Report*.

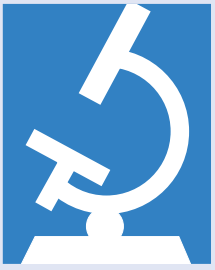


More than 100 participants from around the country attended a historic Hispanic/Latino Genetics Community Consultation Network summit meeting in Washington, DC June 22-24. The participants included, from left, Carolina Godinez, MS, Father Patricio Guillen and Ventura Gutierrez. Coordinated by *Redes En Acción*, Baylor College of Medicine and research institutions of the National Institutes of Health, the summit attracted the largest body of Hispanic/Latino genetics experts and other stakeholders, as well as representatives of federal agencies, to discuss genetics issues relevant to Latinos. A report of the meeting and recommendations of the participants will be issued soon.

*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



# RESEARCH

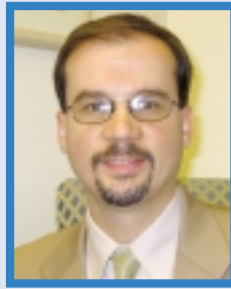
## Quality of Life

**Martin Perez, PhD**  
*Duarte, California*

Little is known about the role culture plays in cancer quality-of-life outcomes, particularly in Latinos. That's why Martin Perez, PhD, a clinical research psychologist at the City of Hope Cancer Center, is working to raise awareness of the need for researchers to include more minority samples in clinical studies.

His recently funded *Redes En Acción* pilot project, "Coping and Quality of Life in Latino Cancer Patients," explores the relationship among cancer beliefs, coping and quality of life, and helps identify the styles of coping and aspects of quality of life that are most important for Hispanic/Latino cancer patients.

"This study will shed light on ways of tailoring psychosocial intervention to culture," he says. "The goal of the study is to gather data that will facilitate the development of empirically driven mental health services for Latino cancer patients." The data will be used to develop future research using prospective, experimental designs, he adds.



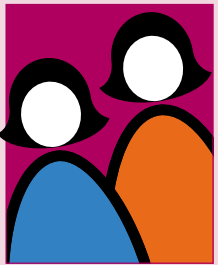
Dr. Perez has devoted much of his career to researching quality of life in cancer patients and their families. He began his research career in 1988 as an undergraduate student at the University of California, Irvine, examining the impact of health on quality of life.

He went on to receive MA and PhD degrees at the University of Southern California in clinical psychology with an emphasis on health psychology. He received a Departmental Dissertation of the Year Award for his National Cancer Institute-funded study examining a brief pre-surgical communication enhancement intervention for prostate cancer patients and their partners.

Since Latinos are the fastest-growing ethnic minority group in the country and make up almost one-third of patients in the City of Hope Cancer Center, Dr. Perez firmly believes more research is needed to better understand "the key ingredients and mechanisms through which cultural attitudes have effects on coping and ultimately on the quality of life of cancer patients. There is much that we can do to improve psychosocial care for these patients."

More specifically, Dr. Perez hopes to gain insight into the role culture plays following treatment. "If we understand the unique interactions between cultural attitudes about cancer, coping and quality of life in Latino cancer patients, we can then tailor psychological interventions to meet the needs of the Latino population," he emphasizes.

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



# TRAINING

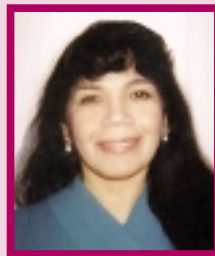
## Health Care Justice

**Raquel Diaz-Sprague, MS**  
*Columbus, Ohio*

Through intense interdisciplinary training and a strong interest in social justice, Raquel Diaz-Sprague, MS, has assumed leadership roles in various education and service-oriented organizations.

An Adjunct Instructor in the School of Allied Medical Professions, College of Medicine & Public Health at OSU, she also serves as Executive Director of the Association for Women in Science of Central Ohio and Founding Chair of the Latino Health Alliance. In addition, she is Founding Director of La Clínica Latina, a bilingual, free primary-care clinic for Latinos funded by OSU Medical Center. She also works with *Redes En Acción* as a member of the North Central Regional Community Advisory Committee and a research fellow.

"I hope to...promote health care justice and to develop and implement projects that draw from the strengths of the Latino culture to increase wellness and prevention among Latino communities," says the Peruvian-born professor. "Through *Redes En Acción*, I have learned of the difficulties Latino patients face in



achieving quality of life after cancer and I have decided to make cancer my topic of research.

"Communication is transcendental when the diagnosis of cancer is made, and this is an area where I want to contribute and make a difference."

In addition to coordinating annual conferences to address gender and ethical issues in science, technology and medicine at Ohio State University (OSU), Professor Diaz-Sprague has impacted the university curriculum by developing and co-teaching a service-learning course entitled "Medical Communication with Latino Patients." The course examines medical phraseology appropriate for Latinos, medically relevant cultural issues, and social and economic factors.

After earning a BS degree in Pharmacy and Biochemistry from the Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, she received an International Fulbright Fellowship to pursue graduate studies in the United States. She received a Masters in Science in microbiology and a Masters in labor & human resource management at OSU.

Her vision is to develop a "Living *La Vida Sana*" project that will address health from a holistic perspective. "This project will be deeply rooted in Latin American traditions," she says, "encouraging healthy eating in the company of family and friends, celebrating each other's birthdays, continuing a culture of laughter and lightheartedness, cultivating a love of music and dance, that keeps people cheerful, youthful and fit into advanced age, in addition to preventive health and mental health care."

Contributed by: **Haydee Encarnación, MS, MPH, CHES**  
*Redes En Acción* Coordinator, North Central Region



# AWARENESS

## Las Isabelas

**Ysabel Duron**  
*San Francisco, California*



She's primarily known in the San Francisco Bay Area as a television news reporter and weekend anchor, but in her private life, Ysabel Duron plays another, equally dynamic role – as a powerful advocate for women with breast cancer.

She's a co-founding member and former president and executive director of *Las Isabelas*, a non-profit agency offering breast cancer support services and education for Spanish-speaking Hispanic/Latina women. Initially formed as a breast cancer support group for Latinas, *Las Isabelas* took its name from one of the original members, Isabel Bellot, who died from the disease.

Ysabel Duron, a Hodgkin's cancer survivor, felt that she could play an important part in the evolution of the group. As a TV personality, she had increased cancer awareness in the Bay area when she brought her story of survival to television in the award-winning series "Life with Cancer."

"When my own cancer was diagnosed in 1998, I thought I was

not ready to die," she recalls. "I remember saying very distinctly: 'OK, God, what's the point?' I came to believe *Las Isabelas* was the point."

*Las Isabelas* provides women with psychosocial support, health education, information and services such as transportation, translation, home and hospital visits, crisis intervention and self-esteem workshops. In 2002, the organization opened a drop-in center in San Jose that includes a library and Internet access to cancer information.

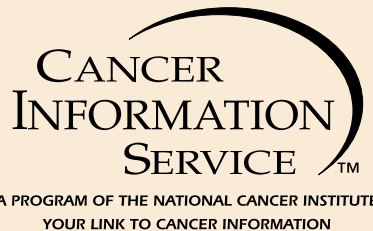
Last year, Ysabel was honored by the California Association of Nonprofit with the 2002 Innovation in Health Services Award for her "display of excellence and commitment to both her organization and community." The award resulted from a *Las Isabelas* program called *Casa a Casa*, which takes breast health education to Latinas in their homes, schools and workplaces. She also serves on the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation Hispanic/Latino Task Force.

Though she recently stepped aside as executive director, Ysabel continues to devote a large portion of her time to *Las Isabelas*, and the organization is thriving.

"My vision...is that it become a drop-in center for all Latinos around issues of cancer," she says. "They all need the same culturally and linguistically sensitive treatment, and I envision *Las Isabelas* as the bridge to that quality experience, the go-to agency with model programs."

Contributed by: **Marynieves Díaz-Méndez, MD**  
*Redes En Acción* Outreach Coordinator  
San Francisco, California

## CIS 5 A Day pilot study promotes healthy eating



Nationwide, over 75 percent of Latinos report eating fewer than five fruits and vegetables a day, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. With the links between diet and cancer – and the fact that cancer is the second-leading cause of death for the Hispanic/Latino population – efforts are being made to promote healthy eating among Latinos.

One such effort directed at all Americans, the National "5 A Day" for Better Health Program, aims to increase fruit-and-vegetable consumption to at least five servings daily. From April through June, select offices of the Cancer Information Service (CIS) accrued callers for a 5 A Day pilot study through its 1-800-4-CANCER Information Service.

After providing a brief proactive education message, CIS sent individually tailored print materials to each caller, with follow-up materials disseminated for three months. A goal of the 5 A Day dissemination study was to motivate large numbers of callers to increase their intake of fruits and vegetables by at least one a day.

Data from the initial 5 A Day study conducted by CIS demonstrated an increase in fruit and vegetable intake among those callers who received individually tailored print materials, as opposed to callers who received non-tailored print materials. These results are supported by several other studies that indicate an advantage to using tailored health communications to influence health behavior.

For healthy Hispanic/Latino recipes using fruits and vegetables, call 1-800-4-CANCER and request a copy of the bilingual publication, *Celebre la Cocina Hispana*. For more information on the National Cancer Institute's 5 A Day for Better Health Program, visit a special web site ([www.5aday.gov](http://www.5aday.gov)).

## Clinical trials project

continued from page 1

and package them for easy use and wider dissemination."

In addition to promoting clinical trial interest in general, the project in Houston is testing actual recruitment to the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Genetics Network Registry.

The outreach program is significant for the Hispanic/Latino population because about 21,000 Latinos in the United States are expected to die of cancer this year, according to the American Cancer Society. And more than 54,000 are expected to receive a first-time cancer diagnosis. Clinical research in Latinos is vital to better understand cancer in this population and find effective means of prevention and control.

# FOCUS: *Redes* Co-Principal Investigator **Martha Medrano**

**M**artha A. Medrano, MD, MPH, Co-Principal Investigator for the South Central Region, is Assistant Dean of Continuing Medical Education (CME), Director of the Hispanic Center of Excellence (HCOE) and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.



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

I'm directing the Cancer Ambassador Program for *Redes En Acción*. For HCOE, I'm working on appropriate interpreter training for ad hoc interpreters and a cultural and linguistic needs assessment for the county hospital ambulatory care programs.

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

Effects of child trauma on HIV risk behavior in female drug addicts, cultural and linguistic competence in medical school education

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

Being Director of the Medical Hispanic Center of Excellence and Dean of CME. Both have allowed me to influence and create policies that have impacted minority and majority faculty and students.

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

The medical students. It never ceases to amaze me how bright, intelligent and eager they are to give back to their communities.

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

Poverty and poor lifestyle choices. Obesity, poor nutrition and smoking have

tremendous impacts on Latinos' health. Poverty at times does not allow easy access to prevention programs, early screening and health care that may prevent cancer or detect the disease early.

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

By emphasizing how important this is for their families and themselves (for women in particular).

## **From your personal experience, what are the major challenges/opportunities for minority women in medicine?**

Historically, women have maneuvered their way within the medical profession working as hard as men but not receiving the equivalent amount of pay or recognition. Minorities in medicine have also struggled with discrimination and lack of opportunity. Latinas are sometimes faced with returning home to become

caregivers to an elderly parent or grandparent because their families may have limited financial resources and Latina students feel a commitment to their families. Latinas also face pressure from parents or in-laws to have children, even though they are in medical school.

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

Work hard to achieve your goals, but in the process do not forget to give back to your community.

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

That I was a good person.

## Goal of clinician/researcher: 'Relieve suffering'

### **Luis E. Raez, MD, FACP**

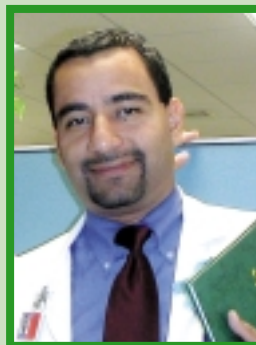
*Miami, Florida*

For Luis E. Raez, MD, whose patient load at Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami is largely Hispanic, frustration is seeing a new patient with a breast tumor "as large as 20-25 centimeters, which has been growing for months or even years before the patient sought treatment."

Although he has devoted much of his career to cancer research, Dr. Raez feels that cancer education and awareness – particularly in the area of preventive care – are equally important. His frustration lies in the fact that if those patients diagnosed at a late stage "had been screened early and treated, the prognosis would be drastically different."

A Clinical Assistant Professor of Medicine and Associate Director of Thoracic Oncology in the division of hematology / oncology at the University of Miami School of Medicine, Dr. Raez also serves as co-chair of the Thoracic Oncology Group at the university's Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center. In addition, he recently assumed the role of Clinical Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, and he has become a Fellow in the American College of Physicians.

Dr. Raez, who received his medical degree from Cayetano Heredia Peruvian University, completed an internship and



residency in internal medicine at Jackson Memorial Hospital/VAMC. It was during a three-year fellowship in hematology / oncology at Sylvester Cancer Center and Jackson Memorial that he began his extensive cancer research.

Since then he has earned impressive credentials in chemotherapeutic agent and vaccine development. Indeed, his work with central nervous system lymphomas in AIDS has gained national attention. A new therapy he developed, which has prolonged the lives of some patients by up to two years, is being examined in universities nationwide by the AIDS

Malignancies Consortium, the largest AIDS malignancy group in the country.

His cancer vaccine research is generating attention as well. With assistance from mentor Dr. Eckhard Podack, Dr. Raez is developing two lung cancer vaccines, which have shown promise in initial trials. Currently, no cancer vaccines are FDA-approved, and the American Society of Clinical Oncology has awarded Dr. Raez a Research Career Development Award for his ground-breaking research.

Despite his research achievements – or perhaps because of them – Dr. Raez is clear about his overall goal as a physician: to relieve suffering from cancer with prevention and treatment.

Contributed by: **John Sentz, Intern**  
National Hispanic Medical Association

# Salud En Acción web site offers new online resource

A new Hispanic health resource is available online with the debut of the *Salud En Acción*: National Hispanic/Latino Health Communication Research web site. The new site, under the Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Research Center (CDPCRC) at Baylor College of Medicine, can be found at [www.saludenaccion.org](http://www.saludenaccion.org).

The site offers comprehensive information about Hispanic/Latino health communication research activities that the Center has been engaged in for several years under the leadership of Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH. *Salud En Acción* has primarily focused expertise and research efforts in the following areas: breast cancer, community-based projects, multi-risk-factor cancer control studies, genetics education, clinical trials recruitment, and tobacco prevention and control.

Featured on the *Salud En Acción* web site are “fact sheets” describing 13 current and three past research initiatives, as well as historical data and publications that are available in video, audio and print media formats. Among the current initiatives is *Redes En Acción*: The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network.

The CDPCRC plans to continue to build upon the national framework of the current and past initiatives, as well as the research coalitions established with cancer research centers, community-based organizations and federal partners.

If you would like more information or have a comment about the CDPCRC Hispanic/Latino research projects, go to the “Contact Us” page on the web site and use the information provided to write or e-mail *Salud En Acción*.



## Study examines Latino nutrition communication

Does it matter how nutrition information is communicated to Latinos? Preliminary results from a study directed by a *Redes En Acción* co-investigator indicate that it does.

In a National Cancer Institute-funded project comparing different forms of nutrition health communication, Latinas who received personalized counseling via lay health advisors (*promotoras*) plus tailored print materials consumed fewer calories and significantly lower levels of total fat, total saturated fat and total carbohydrates.

The study, “Interpersonal and Print Nutrition Communication for a Latino Population: *Secretos de la Buena Vida*,” evaluated whether such a personalized approach was more effective than tailored materials delivered in a “distance learning” format, and whether these two strategies were more effective than standard off-the-shelf materials targeted to a Latino population.



“This relative superiority of lay health advisor-plus-tailored-print may derive from the ‘personal touch’ achieved in the face-to-face interactions with women trying to achieve dietary behavior change,” noted Principal Investigator John Elder, PhD, a researcher at San Diego State University and *Redes En Acción*

Southwest Regional Network Center co-investigator.

“Alternatively, their success may be associated with the degree to which the women, under the guidance of the lay health advisor, truly interacted with the tailored print material.”

The research project followed 351 participants for a 12-week period. The primary outcome variables were calories from fat and grams of fiber. Interestingly, the off-the-shelf materials, which were also in Spanish but otherwise were not tailored to the individual, did about as well as the tailored materials by themselves.



## ACTIVIDADES Special Events

### ICC/CIS Conference

*Redes En Acción* was well represented at a recent educational forum to discuss approaches to health disparities and cancer control in Puerto Rico. The conference, Comprehensive Cancer Control in Puerto Rico: Challenges and Opportunities, was presented by the Intercultural Cancer Council and the Cancer Information Service.

The program included addresses by Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH, *Redes En Acción* Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) for the Southwest Regional Network Center (RNC), and Edward J. Trapido, ScD, former Co-PI for the Southeast RNC and current Associate Director, Epidemiology and Genetics Research Program of the National Cancer Institute.

Regional *Redes En Acción* representatives attending the conference included Frank Penedo, PhD, and Angel Looor, MA (Southeast RNC); Aida Giachello, PhD, and Haydee Encarnación-García, PhD, MPH (North Central RNC); and Ana Talavera, MPH, (Southwest RNC).

### PBS Smoking Series

A Public Broadcasting System television series focusing on tobacco use among minority populations featured anti-smoking authorities associated with *Redes En Acción*. The series, *To the Contrary*, included a segment titled Smoking & Latinas.

Among the experts interviewed for the program were Dr. Giachello; Patricia Sosa, a member of the *Redes* National Steering Committee; and Lourdes Baezconde-Garbanati, PhD, MPH, a member of the Regional Community Advisory Committee for the Southwest RNC.

# Fotonovela sends cancer message

In the quest to explore different avenues for raising cancer awareness among Latinos, *Redes En Acción* participated in a project that distributed 750,000 *fotonovelas* that incorporated an anti-cancer message in the storyline.

The 32-page, Spanish-language photo booklet, *Tu Salud Es Lo Primero* (Your Health Comes First), was produced by TV Promo International for Mother's Day distribution in areas of the country with high concentrations of Latinos.

Western Union served as the primary sponsor of the publication, which used widely recognized actors from *telenovelas* that are popular among Hispanic/Latino television audiences throughout the country. Stars of the story included Marga Lopez and Julio Preciado.

In addition to the cancer message in the dialogue, the *fotonovela* featured a full-page ad on the inside back cover urging readers to call the toll-free Cancer Information Service (CIS) 1-800-4-CANCER number for information about cancer prevention and treatment. The *Redes En Acción* and CIS logos appeared in the ad.



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