



## Breast cancer genetics study in special populations funded

### Komen Foundation grant supports initial phase

Thanks to a grant from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, *Redes En Acción* will take the lead on a groundbreaking new project aimed at researching, designing and disseminating customized breast cancer genetic educational materials to five special populations in the United States.

The Breast Cancer Genetics Education Materials and Programs Development Project will involve the National Cancer Institute's Special Populations Networks (SPNs) and the NCI's Cancer Genetics Network (CGN). Baylor College of Medicine is coordinating Phase 1 under the direction of Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, Principal Investigator, and Kipling Gallion, Co-PI.

The primary objective of Phase I, which is funded by the Komen Foundation, will be development of a culturally sensitive survey instrument to assess knowledge, attitudes and behaviors regarding breast cancer genetics among African Americans, Appalachians, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Latinos and Native Americans.

"This is truly a unique opportunity," said Dr. Ramirez. "Unfortunately, the scientific literature on issues regarding breast cancer genetics and any of the five special populations involved is extremely sparse. So for the first time, these diverse populations will collaborate to study cancer genetic issues that researchers know very little about."

By initiating a cooperative research effort among the five SPNs and with the CGN and Komen Foundation, this project will break new ground. Collaboration among such ethnically and racially diverse populations on the development of a comparable, standardized survey instrument is unique to this study. In addition, the organizations all share a common interest in reaching underserved populations, so the relationships forged through this study will provide valuable links for current and future minority research efforts.

*"The Komen Foundation is proud to be a part of extending culturally sensitive information on breast cancer genetics to these special population groups."*

*Dena L. Jackson*

## Inside



We're very pleased and excited about the recent announcement of a pioneering new research project focusing on breast cancer genetics

communications involving all five of the major special populations in the United States.

The first phase of the Breast Cancer Genetics Education Materials and Programs Development Project will be funded by the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. This is a major collaborative effort for the National Cancer Institute's Special Populations Networks, the NCI's Cancer Genetics Network and the Komen Foundation. And it's our lead story for this issue.

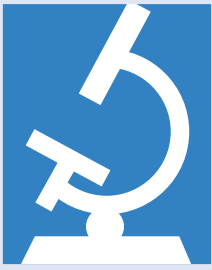
Speaking of collaborations, one of *Redes En Acción's* primary partners, the Cancer Information Service, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary of service to the American public. We want to congratulate the CIS on this milestone. In the course of its celebration, the CIS took time to recognize its strong national and regional partnerships with *Redes En Acción*. You'll find this news inside.

Also in this issue, you'll find information about some of the new information and additions found in our *Redes En Acción* web site. These include downloadable reports on both our 2000 and 2001 National Steering Committee meetings, and helpful guidelines packages for our training and pilot research project programs.

And, in keeping with our mission, inside you will see profiles of individuals in different regions of the country who are making significant contributions in the areas of Latino cancer research, training and awareness.

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

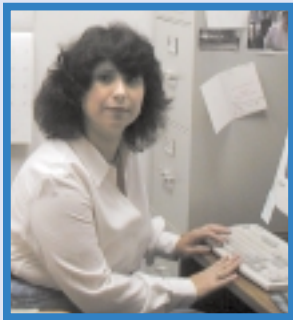
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# RESEARCH

## Culture and Cancer

**Dr. Dolores Rodríguez-Reimann**  
*San Diego, California*



Dolores Rodríguez-Reimann, PhD, has spent the majority of her career investigating the relationship between culture and health-related issues in the Latino population. That background is serving her well as she seeks and identifies specific elements in acculturation that influence smoking behavior in Latino youth.

Dr. Rodríguez-Reimann's research will help in developing effective strategies for cancer-related interventions that fit the specific needs of the Latino population. "I hope that through my research work of behavioral health issues pertinent to the Latino population, I will be able to impact public policies on issues of access and delivery consistent with the particular needs of Latinos," she says.

Although her initial work was in psychology, Dr. Rodríguez-Reimann's interest in health-related issues began during her

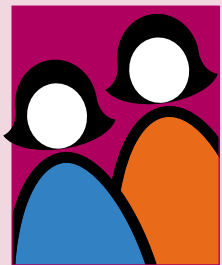
undergraduate career while participating in Minority Student Medical School Familiarization Programs. She received a BA in psychology from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1985. After completing her first masters degree in counseling services from Webster's University in 1990, she went on to receive a masters in psychology in 1993 and a PhD in clinical psychology in 1996 at the California School of Professional Psychology.

During her graduate career, Dr. Rodríguez-Reimann's primary interest turned to health and cultural issues in the Latino population. Much of her research investigates the associations among health behaviors, acculturative factors and health service access barriers. For example, her current work focuses on developing a structural model that specifies the predictive relationships among cigarette smoking, family functioning, acculturative stress and barriers to health information/care among Latino high school students.

Born and raised in the Mexican border town of Piedras Negras, Dr. Rodríguez-Reimann attributes her appreciation of the Latino culture and her interest in culture-related health issues to having been immersed in both the Mexican and U.S. cultures during her upbringing. Dr. Gregory Talavera, Assistant Professor at San Diego State University and Dr. Rodríguez-Reimann's mentor, agrees that her biculturalism is a definite asset.

"Dr. Reimann's personal background and interests represent a perspective on cancer control that cannot be taught," he says. "Only through a diverse research community can we address some of the challenging disparity issues that we face."

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



# TRAINING

## Building the Future

**Dr. Angel Gálvez**  
*Chicago, Illinois*

Angel Gálvez, MD, Assistant Professor at Rush University Medical School in Chicago, knows firsthand about the difficulties that Latino cancer patients face. During his years as a practicing physician at the Illinois Masonic Medical Center, he became acutely aware of the tremendous toll cancer takes on Latinos, including the financial, cultural, linguistic and institutional barriers they confront in accessing cancer-related services. He hopes to see more individuals in the cancer field who are closely attuned to the special needs of Latinos.

"There is a great need to work with Latinos who are terminally ill and who need the best type of scientific interventions and treatments, as well as the necessary spiritual, social and psychological support," he says.

Despite the current under-representation of Latinos in the medical science community, Dr. Gálvez is optimistic about the future of Latinos in cancer research, and notes that "with the

development of genetic and molecular research, cancer research is a lot more attractive for many young people, as there is so much that can be done to help the community."

However, he acknowledges that in order to encourage young Latinos to pursue a cancer research career, there is a need for mentors who can provide the support and assistance necessary to motivate young Latinos to finish high school, go to college and pursue graduate or medical degrees. Additionally, Dr. Gálvez believes, the need to increase awareness among young Latinos about the health and cancer issues that their communities face is strong.

"It is critical for young Latinos to have the opportunity to know, to assess and to work with different Latino population groups, so they can develop the interest and the awareness of their health needs, and the challenges and gratifications involved," he emphasizes.

"There is a sense of urgency! It is important for them to understand the problems, so they can seek solutions."

A native of Spain, Dr. Gálvez received his medical degree at the University of Barcelona. In addition to his Rush University Medical School faculty appointment, he is also the Director of the Latino Cancer Institute, which he established in 1997 in response to the disparities he observed in Latino cancer



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# AWARENESS

## Promoting Latino Health

### **Maria Castillo-Couch** *Las Vegas, Nevada*

Maria Castillo-Couch has long recognized the special needs of Latinos, particularly those who are new to this country. She has been serving the Latino community in Las Vegas for over 15 years through active involvement in community activities that address a variety of needs, including cancer and other health-related issues that affect the Latino community.

“It’s so important to pass on information that helps Hispanic immigrants acclimate to their new culture and environment,” she says. “I remember how hard it was for our family to learn how to cope in a strange but wonderful country. Why not show others the way – improving their quality of life through information on health issues.”

In addition to volunteering at many community events, Maria has also taken an active role in bringing health awareness projects to the Latino community. In the fall of 2001, she organized a health fair that provided free medical services and information about major health issues such as cancer prevention to over 700 Latinos in a predominantly Latino neighborhood.

In 1999, Maria received the Small Business Administration Minority Business Advocate Award for her work with the Latin Chamber of Commerce, and last year was one of only three people

in Nevada recognized by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for outstanding service during the Census 2000. Most recently, a local television station selected her for its Hispanic Heritage Month Portraits of Success Award, highlighting her years of community involvement. Despite these accolades, she continues to search for ways to effectively bring health and cancer awareness to the Latino community in Nevada.



Maria’s most recent work as a member of the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Regional Center Advisory Committee has provided her the opportunity to continue promoting cancer awareness. As the committee’s Southern Nevada representative, she serves as a valuable link between local community agencies and the information provided through the *Redes En Acción* initiative.

Maria feels that her active involvement in *Redes En Acción* has enriched her life and inspired her to take additional action to promote Latino health in Nevada.

“My role on the committee became crystal clear when Drs. Eliseo Pérez-Stable and Amelie Ramirez invited me to participate in the National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) Academy this summer,” she said. “After meeting the researchers and learning about the different NCI-sponsored projects throughout the nation, I realized I could do something similar in Nevada. So I enrolled this fall in the environment studies doctorate program offered by University of Nevada Las Vegas. It may take a few years, but I am on my way.”

## CIS makes new clinical trials resource available

Scientific discoveries are providing more and more insights into the causes and prevention of cancer. Many of these discoveries are a result of clinical trials conducted with patients, as well as healthy people.

Among Latinos, many uninsured men and women are diagnosed and/or die from cancer more often than other groups. Participating in cancer clinical trials is one way they can help make sure cancer research is relevant to them.

Educating minority and medically underserved populations about the benefits of clinical trials is a priority for the Cancer Information Service (CIS). The CIS, a program of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), has provided the latest and most accurate cancer information to more than 9 million patients and families, the public, and health professionals since 1976.

Last fall, *Redes En Acción* partnered with the CIS in the development and distribution of television, radio and newspaper public service announcements (PSAs) promoting Latino participation in cancer studies. The PSAs, produced in both

English and Spanish, went to more than 400 media outlets nationwide. (To view the PSAs, visit [www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org).)

CIS staff recently attended NCI training on a new resource that will help support cancer clinical trial education and outreach efforts for minority and underserved populations. The program, called NCI’s Clinical Trials Education Series, includes a self-modulated workbook for individuals who want to develop a basic understanding of clinical trials, an in-depth program for health care professionals, and an interactive resource guide for outreach, education and advocacy. Videos, slides, brochures and booklets supplement the series.

For more information, contact your regional CIS Partnership Program Manager at 1-800-4-CANCER, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Or you may order the program through NCI’s Publications Locator at [www.cancer.gov/publications](http://www.cancer.gov/publications).



# NHMA NEWS

## NHMA Conference Set for Next Month

The 6th Annual National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) Conference, scheduled March 22-24 in Washington D.C., will focus on “Healthy Hispanic Communities.”

This year, the NHMA is inviting experts from across the nation to share their recommendations for building healthy Hispanic communities. More than 800 Hispanic physicians, medical students, policymakers and health care industry representatives are expected to attend the conference.

The agenda includes a wide variety of sessions and workshops, including a presentation on “Cancer Clinical Trials & *Redes En Acción*.” *Redes* investigators will discuss the initiative’s current national media campaign promoting Latino awareness of

cancer research and participation in clinical trials.

Recipients of the NHMA Hispanic Health Leadership Awards this year include First Lady Laura Bush; Gov. Tom Ridge, Director of the White House Office of Homeland Security; Senator John Edwards; Congresswoman Hilda Solis; Dr. Yvonne Maddox, Deputy Director of the National Institutes of Health; and the late Dr. Helen Rodriguez-Trias, who was honored for her past achievements and contributions.

For more information about the NHMA annual conference, call (202) 628-5895 or e-mail [NHMA@NHMAMD.ORG](mailto:NHMA@NHMAMD.ORG).



National  
Hispanic  
Medical  
Association

## Funding for Genetics Study

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As a prominent and widely recognized breast cancer resource, the Komen Foundation has a particular interest in the progress of this study, said Dena L. Jackson, PhD, CHES, Grants Specialist for the Foundation.

“The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation is a trusted source of breast health and breast cancer information for people all over the world and is instrumental in connecting people with the resources they need in the fight against breast cancer,” she noted.

“Research has shown us that using targeted educational materials increases their impact on individuals, making them more likely to enact life-saving behaviors. The Komen Foundation is proud to be a part of extending culturally sensitive information on breast cancer genetics to these special population groups.”

Working together in Phase 1 to design and develop the survey instrument will be representatives from the national SPN initiatives, genetic education experts, genetic counselors, an epidemiologist and a representative from the NCI office for the

“This study hopes to fill some of the gaps that currently exist in breast cancer genetics research.”

*Amelie G. Ramirez*

CGN. This collaboration will ensure that the result is a research tool that is culturally appropriate to each of the special populations and that accurately reflects the most relevant issues related to breast cancer genetics in these populations.

“This study hopes to fill some of the gaps that currently exist in breast cancer genetics research,” said Dr. Ramirez. “Since most studies to date have involved Caucasian women with

education levels beyond high school, existing data may not be applicable to more ethnically and socioeconomically diverse samples.

“This study hopes to bring to the forefront the issues regarding breast cancer genetics that are relevant and important to each of these five special groups, and to use this knowledge to develop needed culturally sensitive breast cancer genetics education materials and programs.”

Phase 2 of the project will see the administration of the survey by each of the five SPNs within their populations, and the data collected will be analyzed and reported. During Phase 3, information gathered from the survey will be used to develop culturally appropriate education and intervention materials and programs tailored to each of the populations. Upon completion of Phase 1, investigators will pursue funding for Phases 2 and 3.

## TRAINING: Building the Future

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prevention and treatment.

With a core group of Latinos representing different disciplines, the Latino Cancer Institute provides culturally appropriate and affordable, high-quality cancer treatment to Latinos, and conducts community outreach and education to promote cancer awareness and cancer prevention through screening. The institute also participates in national multi-site clinical drug trials and conducts clinical research to advance cancer treatment for Latinos.

For those who may be considering a future in the cancer field, Dr. Gálvez notes that cancer prevention, treatment and research require a high level of commitment, but also come with abundant intrinsic rewards.

“Those who enter this field should do so to help prevent cancer in our communities and to treat those living with cancer with dignity and respect,” he stresses.

Contributed by: **Aida L. Giachello, PhD**  
*Redes En Acción* Co-Principal Investigator  
Chicago, Illinois

# HONORES

## Awards & Achievements

**Maria Diaz-Mendez, MD**, Community Outreach Coordinator for the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Regional Network Center, has been awarded the Special Recognition Award by the American Cancer Society, California Division. This award recognizes volunteer groups or individuals for exceptional achievement in one or more of the Division's strategic directions, and is the division's highest honor. Tribute to Dr. Diaz-Mendez and other honorees was given at the 2001 California Division Annual Meeting Recognition Luncheon in Los Angeles.

**Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH**, Principal Investigator of *Redes En Acción*, was honored by the National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco (LCAT) with an award recognizing her "contribution and dedication in curbing the tobacco epidemic in our communities through the formation of partnerships." The award was presented at the First National Latino Conference on Tobacco Control and Prevention, hosted by LCAT, in Washington, D.C.

The Cancer Information Service (CIS) has recognized *Redes En Acción* both nationally and regionally in recent months. In

celebrating its 25th anniversary with the theme "Celebrating Our Spirit of Caring and Commitment," the CIS awarded *Redes En Acción* a Certificate of Appreciation. The honor recognized the initiative "for working in partnership with us to improve the lives of people affected by cancer and for sharing our spirit of caring and commitment."

Also, the CIS presented the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Regional Network Center the CIS 25th Anniversary Special Recognition Partner Award. The award, given at the CIS 25th Anniversary Regional Celebration in Union City, California, recognizes organizations "committed to working with the CIS to improve cancer information and education, and expansion of Partnership Program staffing and efforts to reach medically underserved populations."

In the CIS South East Region, *Redes En Acción* was the December focus of the "Partnership Spotlight" on the region's web site, <http://cancer.duke.edu/CIS/>. The "Spotlight" segment provided an overview of *Redes En Acción* and some of the initiative's recent accomplishments, including the national media campaign promoting Latino participation in cancer clinical trials. *Redes* Southeast Regional Network Center Co-Principal Investigator **Edward Trapido, ScD**, and Coordinator **Angel Llor** were recognized in the web article, which also drew attention to the *Redes En Acción* pilot project grant program and national web site ([www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org)). The South East and Coastal CIS web site also introduced a new section to help both Spanish- and English-speakers locate cancer prevention, early detection and treatment information.

# NOTICIAS

## News to Use



### DHHS launches new Latino health web site

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently launched healthfinder®ESPANOL, a user-friendly Spanish-language web site offering reliable health and health services information.

Modeled after the English-language version, healthfinder®ESPANOL features a Spanish searchable index of carefully reviewed health information from more than 1,800 government agencies, non-profit organizations and universities regarding cancer and a wide variety of other health topics. The web address for healthfinder®ESPANOL is [www.healthfinder.gov/espanol/](http://www.healthfinder.gov/espanol/).

### List of NCI Spanish resources available

The Rocky Mountain Cancer Information Service, which serves Arizona, Colorado, Montana, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming, has published a Special Edition of the Rocky

Mountain Cancer Bulletin containing an updated summary of the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) information and resource materials available in Spanish.

The Special Edition lists all available Spanish-language NCI publications and fact sheets with the name of the corresponding or comparable resource title in English provided.

For a copy, contact Gina Espinosa-Salcedo at 719-776-3150 or [GinaEspinosa@Centura.org](mailto:GinaEspinosa@Centura.org). To obtain the latest versions of NCI publications and fact sheets in Spanish, call 1-800-4-CANCER or visit the NCI's web site at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov). The Rocky Mountain Cancer Information Service regional web site is [www.rmciis.org](http://www.rmciis.org).

### Latino Men & DRE Screening

Only 53 percent of Latino males 40 and over report ever having a digital rectal exam (DRE), the principal screening test for prostate cancer, according to a study reported in the January 2002 issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

The survey showed that 32 percent of Latino respondents had never heard of the procedure. In addition, the study found that DRE screening rates, as well as knowledge and attitudes about the procedure, varied among Latino ethnic population groups.

Lead author of the article, titled "Predictors of digital rectal examination in U.S. Latinos," is Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH, *Redes En Acción* Co-Principal Investigator for the Southwest Regional Network Center in San Diego, California. The survey, conducted as part of the National Hispanic Leadership Initiative on Cancer: *En Acción* study, collected data from 1,499 Latino men aged 40 and over from sites across the United States.

## New information, documents available on *Redes* web site

Recent additions to the *Redes En Acción* web site ([www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org)) now make it easier to find updated information about the *Redes* initiative and its pilot research project and training programs.

Copies of the 2000 and 2001 *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee (NSC) Meeting Reports are now available for downloading. Both have been placed on the web site as portable document format (pdf) files, accessible with Adobe Acrobat, which is available free on the Internet.

In addition to a discussion and photographs of the sessions conducted at the 2nd annual NSC meeting in San Antonio last August, the 2001 report provides background information and updates on many of the *Redes En Acción* cancer awareness, research and training activities.

For anyone interested in learning more about the *Redes* initiative's pilot project program, the web site now includes a section devoted to this research component. The pilot projects guidelines package, which may be downloaded, includes information about eligibility criteria, a proposal submission schedule for the program's two annual funding cycles, and regional contact information for application submissions.

In addition, new training guidelines and evaluation forms for Latino junior faculty members who aspire to careers as cancer researchers through *Redes En Acción* are available on the web site in Adobe Acrobat portable document format.



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