



The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network

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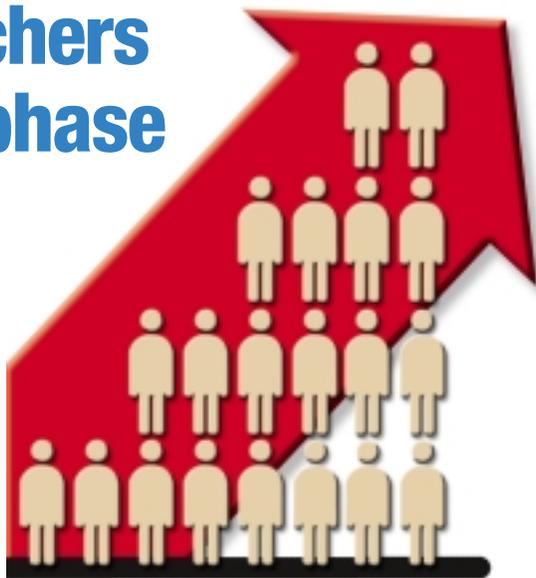
Redes researchers launch early phase trial study

By addressing cultural and other barriers to early-phase clinical trial participation, a two-year study recently initiated in South Texas will benefit both cancer patients and research oncologists.

The research project, "Increasing Early Phase Clinical Trial (EPCT) Accrual among Hispanics in South Texas," will identify barriers to Latino participation in clinical research and develop interventions to help reduce these obstacles. Early-phase (Phase I and II) clinical trials determine which experimental cancer prevention and treatment agents show promise for testing in larger, randomized trials.

"Increased participation in these clinical trials by Latinos means greater opportunity for cutting-edge treatment for Latino cancer patients," said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, Principal Investigator (PI) of the study as well as PI of *Redes En Acción*. "In addition, it provides a much-needed boost for underrepresented population accrual rates for investigators who are leading these clinical research studies."

The research project represents a partnership between the federal government and the private sector. The study is one of several at institutions around the country that combine funding from the National Cancer Institute and a consortium of pharmaceutical companies to help clinical and comprehensive cancer centers increase participation among underrepresented and older patient populations in early-stage clinical trials. Participating private sector partners are Aventis, Novartis, Eli Lilly and Company, GlaxoSmithKline and Bristol-Myers Squibb.



The partnership's goal is to develop replicable models that NCI cancer centers and other organizations can use to raise early-phase clinical trial accrual rates among members of underrepresented and aging populations. The rapid growth of both of these population groups underscores the need for greater representation in future cancer research efforts.

Under the direction of Dr. Ramirez and Co-Principal Investigators Brad Pollock, PhD, MPH, from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and Eric Rowinsky, MD, from the Cancer Therapy and Research Center, investigators will research clinical trial participation barriers through patient focus groups and interviews, as well as interviews with area oncologists.

Based on information gained from cancer patients and oncologists, researchers will identify the most relevant barriers to early trial participation by South Texas area cancer patients and determine strategies for overcoming the obstacles. The study will incorporate those strategies into an intervention model. Plans call for field-testing the model in a subsequent research study.

Inside



Two of the major recurring themes throughout *Redes En Acción*'s four years of work focusing on Latino cancer issues — innovative research and clinical trials

participation — come together in our lead story in this issue.

A new study of barriers to early-phase clinical trial participation underscores the emphasis *Redes En Acción* researchers place on the value of cancer research for the Latino population. This research holds hope for the future for individuals and families everywhere, and it is vital that underrepresented populations in this country take part in it.

To ensure a Latino role in the progress and promise of this clinical research, we must identify the barriers to trial participation and develop strategies to overcome these obstacles. As our lead story notes, *Redes En Acción* researchers are on the front line in this all-important effort.

Inside, you'll find further evidence of the good work investigators are doing in cancer research. The subject of this issue's Co-Principal Investigator Focus is Dr. Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, who directs the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Regional Network Center and is a strong advocate of cancer research and training efforts benefiting Latinos. His profile is on page 5.

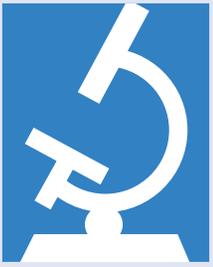
And speaking of innovative research, on page 6 you can learn about a smoking-cessation study in California that's reaching people around the world. It's an Internet-based project presented in both English and Spanish, and it's open to anyone who wishes to quit smoking. Thousands of smokers — a large proportion of whom are Spanish-speaking — are participating.

Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH
Principal Investigator
Redes En Acción

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.

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RESEARCH

Rooted in Reality

Anna Nápoles-Springer, PhD, MPH
San Francisco, California



Anna Nápoles-Springer attributes her aspirations for a research career focused on health disparities to her childhood and professional experiences, which have kept her rooted in reality. Born in California of Mexican immigrants, she experienced firsthand the injustices associated with accessing medical care as an uninsured, limited-English-speaking family in the United States.

Later, as a medical assistant and workers compensation rehabilitation counselor serving Spanish-monolingual men and women, she became convinced that her challenge, “both personal and professional, consists of making the health care system a more equitable and meaningful provider of services to minorities.” To achieve her goal, she graduated with a BA in psychology, an MPH and, in 1998, a PhD in epidemiology.

Dr. Nápoles-Springer, who is currently an Assistant Adjunct Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), served for seven years as a Project Director on the

National Hispanic Leadership Initiative on Cancer: *En Acción* project, and spent much of her time promoting cancer early-detection examinations among Latinos in San Francisco. Her experiences in the community provided direct evidence of the unnecessary suffering of Latina immigrants whose cancer was diagnosed at later stages.

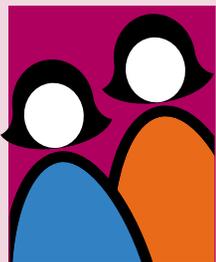
Turning these experiences into a positive effort, she teamed up with Dr. Carmen Ortiz to mobilize peer educators to prevent such avoidable tragedies. A product of this partnership is the Special Populations Network-funded pilot study entitled “Enhancing the Participation of Latinas in Breast Cancer Support Groups.”

Her research endeavors are driven by the firm belief that communities and researchers must work together to achieve real improvements in health disparities. Her Co-Investigator on the pilot study, Dr. Ortiz, is a community advocate and cancer support group leader. Thus, this project brings together a true community-academic partnership designed to increase access to cancer support groups among Latina women with cancer.

Dr. Nápoles-Springer combines her strong commitment to research with community and public service. In 2003, she was awarded the UCSF Division of General Internal Medicine Robert H. Crede Award for Excellence in Community Service and the *Redes En Acción* 2003 Rising Star in Cancer Research Award.

She is a Co-Investigator with the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Regional Network Center and serves on various advisory boards of institutions that aim to eliminate health disparities.

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



TRAINING

Working with Teens

Jeanette Candelaria, MPH
San Diego, California



As Project Coordinator for FUERTE, a National Cancer Institute-funded project that targets smoking among teenagers, Jeanette Candelaria strives not only to prevent tobacco use but also to partner high school students with college-level mentors to offer youths insight into the public health field.

The FUERTE project, which builds on the Latin American tradition of community health advisors, provides much-needed education and lifelong tools to teens regarding the dangers of tobacco and ways to cope with the various pressures to smoke. The project works with college-level staff, who train and mentor high school advisors. Moreover, researchers seek to match the teens with mentors to learn more about public health research techniques and other useful technical skills.

Such relationships can provide “opportunities and mentoring needed to provide young Latinos with the experiences to learn more

about public health and research, valuable skills that translate across occupations and good work ethics,” she believes.

Jeanette, a candidate student in the joint doctoral program in public health at San Diego State University and the University of California, San Diego has benefited from her own mentor relationship. Under the guidance of Dr. John Elder, FUERTE project Principal Investigator and *Redes En Acción* Co-Investigator for the Southwest Regional Center, she has brought several funded projects to fruition and has been first author and co-author in several scientific publications. “Her credentials lagged behind her accomplishments,” notes Dr. Elder.

Born and raised in Springerville, Arizona, a ranching and sawmill town near the White Mountain Apache tribe and Navajo Nation with a population of less than 3,000, Jeanette earned her bachelor’s degree in health science from Arizona State University and masters from San Diego State University, graduating as Health Promotion Student of the Year in 1988. Her resumé includes 15 years at the Center for Behavioral and Community Studies, conducting community interventions addressing issues from cardiovascular disease to smoking cessation.

She decided to pursue her PhD in epidemiology “to improve my job skills, which will make me a better program coordinator, a better mentor to students with whom I work, and allow me to work independently when necessary.”

Obtaining her doctorate degree will be a dream come true, and Jeanette wants others to know that they too can realize their goals. “Yes, Latinas *can* get their masters and PhD degrees.”

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



AWARENESS

Advocate for Latinos

Aida McCammon, MSW, ACSW
Indianapolis, Indiana

For Aida McCammon, MSW, ACSW, serving the Hispanic/Latino community in Indiana has become a way of life. Aida is President/CEO and co-founder of the Indiana Latino Institute, a statewide organization working primarily to curb tobacco use and promote cancer prevention among Latinos.

A social worker, she became the Executive Director and founder of the Wishard Health Services / Hispanic Health Project. In her 17 years of leadership, working with the Latino community in Indianapolis, she has developed several initiatives and has been instrumental in efforts to strengthen agencies and organizations that serve Latinos across the state.

"I would like to see all Latinos in Indiana with proper access to health care and education," she says, "and my professional goal for



the Indiana Latino Institute (ILI) is to develop an organization that will be part of a nationwide Latino organizations network working on tobacco control efforts and cancer prevention initiatives."

Over the years, Aida's involvement in community issues has been extensive. She served as Co-Chair of the Mayor's Commission on Latino Affairs in Indianapolis for two years and a member of the Special Events Committee of the mayor's office. She is actively involved on numerous boards and committees, including the National Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco, Visiting Nurse, Hispanic Education Center, Indiana Minority Health Coalition of Marion County and Indiana Minority Health Advisory Committee. She is also an advisor for the *Redes En Acción* North Central Regional Network Center.

She has been honored for her commitment and leadership in working with the Latino community, including awards from the American Public Health Association / Latino Caucus, Minority Health Coalition, Hispanic Education Center and Hispanic Employees Federal Program. She also was named Advocate of the Year by Smokefree Indiana.

Aida expresses her commitment to the Latino community this way: "I look at my community's great needs, and it hurts to see that our people don't really get what they truly deserve." The ILI works to correct that inequity by offering program development, grant writing, community mobilization, coalition building, effective media use, advocacy and empowerment, health education (cancer, diabetes and HIV/AIDS), youth leadership development, and prevention education focusing on tobacco, alcohol and other drugs.

In addition, in 2004 the ILI will be involved in advocacy/policy, technical assistance, best practices for tobacco, the *promotoras* program for cancer prevention and control, and other issues that impact the well-being of Latinos in Indiana.

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

Mujeres Unidas: Celebration of life

Mujeres Unidas en Celebración, initiated three years ago by The Wellness Community Valley/Ventura to provide support and inspire hope among Latina survivors and those undergoing cancer treatment, attracted 143 women to its 2003 celebration of triumph and life.

For the past three years, the Cancer Information Service (CIS) California Region has been part of the Latina Task Force, Partnered for Progress: Every Woman Counts, the group that plans and executes this fun-filled day-long celebration. Each year, Latinas from Orange County, Ventura County and the Harbor Area unite in the San Fernando Valley to get pampered, receive support and build lasting relationships with other women facing similar cancer experiences.

The keynote speaker for the most recent event was Dr. Aliza Lifshitz, who offered words of encouragement for women battling cancer, while survivors spoke of their determination to live and overcome their condition. Workshops featured hand massages, relaxation and visualization techniques, aromatherapy sessions, moderate exercises and the American Cancer Society's Look Good, Feel Better program.

Festivities included meals and entertainment by Mexican singer



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Carmen Jara. The CIS staffed a booth and disseminated Spanish and English cancer resources on topics such as treatment options, clinical trials and coping with cancer. CIS promotional items were included in "goodie bags" given to each participant at the end of the program.

The event was co-sponsored by the ACS and Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation, Los Angeles County Affiliate.

Removing 'roadblocks' for Latino cancer patients

Jesus Berdeja, MD
Loma Linda, California

When it comes to the pressing needs of Latinos in cancer prevention and research, the challenges facing the health care community are great, as Dr. Jesus Berdeja can attest.

"Latinos have many roadblocks when it comes to health care, especially cancer care," he says. "A general mistrust of the medical community and underutilization of preventive measures contribute to the common presentation of Latinos with cancers in very advanced stages."

Consistent with Dr. Berdeja's experience is the reality that language, lack of transportation and other barriers impede Latinos from seeking medical attention during initial stages of disease and, as a result, potentially curable tumors become incurable or require more rigorous interventions.

As Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology and Oncology at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Dr. Berdeja treats patients with various blood disorders, concentrating primarily on lymphoma patients, and he is an integral part of the stem cell transplant team. A staff physician at Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in the San Bernardino County Medical Facility, he is also planning to open a clinic at the Riverside Regional Medical Center.

His involvement with the clinics in county facilities has allowed him to "extend tertiary care, including stem cell transplantations and clinical trials, to underserved populations otherwise locked out from the academic world," he says.

Born in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, Dr. Berdeja immigrated to the United States at the age of 9. His parents, who worked several jobs to provide for their children, always emphasized the importance of education. Their sacrifice allowed him to attend



Stanford University for his undergraduate work and Harvard University Medical School. After completing his residency in internal medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, he decided to sub-specialize, prompting him to pursue a fellowship in medical oncology and hematology at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Dr. Berdeja's research goal is to improve the care of Latino cancer patients with lymphoma and leukemia. His clinical research interests in immune and immunomodulatory therapies in this patient population will most certainly help define and expand treatment opportunities and paradigms in these difficult disorders.

Many patients with cancer can benefit from experimental treatments only available at tertiary centers, says Dr. Berdeja. "These centers often appear quite distant and impenetrable to many in the population," he notes. "My ability to be present in community hospitals part of the time has allowed me to introduce potentially unavailable treatments to these patients, whom otherwise would have gone unperceived."

Latino participation in clinical trials provides other benefits. Since the majority of patients in clinical research are Caucasian, results from these trials often set precedent for what becomes the standard of care, with results extrapolated to all subpopulations.

"Participation by Latinos in clinical research can not only create options for patients, but is also of great importance in the interpretation of trial results," says Dr. Berdeja. "Improved participation of Latinos in clinical trials will allow us to base the future treatment of Latinos on data and not theory alone."

He believes that minorities, especially Latinos, are badly needed in academic medicine, and that the academic establishment can be greatly demystified through a patient-doctor relationship strengthened by common cultural bonds. He encourages students in all stages of their training to consider academic medicine as an alternate method of reaching out in order to improve and expand the health care of the Latino community.

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

Biennial Symposium offers cancer forum

The 9th Biennial Symposium on Minorities, the Medically Underserved & Cancer, scheduled March 24-28, is expected to attract 1,500 participants from around the United States and elsewhere. The event, presented by the Intercultural Cancer Council and Baylor College of Medicine, will take place at the OMNI Shoreham Hotel in Washington, DC.

Symposium participants will include cancer survivors, physicians, scientists, students, community leaders and patient advocates who are interested or involved in community-based cancer prevention and control programs for minorities and the medically underserved.

Initiated in 1987, the Biennial Symposium series provides a forum for issues of disproportionate cancer incidence, morbidity and mortality in minority and medically underserved populations in the United States and associated territories. The event brings together those who represent all aspects and perspectives of the disease in collaboration with the leadership and front-line

personnel from the affected communities to explore issues, find solutions and make recommendations for the complex problems related to cancer.

At the symposium, decision makers hear from those directly affected by the problem and the policies that surround cancer. Participants from the communities sit at the discussion table to share the most current research, prevention and treatment strategies.

For more information about the 9th Biennial Symposium on Minorities, the Medically Underserved & Cancer, contact:

9th Biennial Symposium
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Houston, TX 77030-1312

Tel: (713) 798-5383 or toll-free 1-877-BIENNIAL (1-877-243-6642)

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Focus: *Redes* Co-Principal Investigator Eliseo Pérez-Stable



Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD,
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Medicine and Co-
Director, Medical
Effectiveness Research Center for Diverse
Populations at the University of
California, San Francisco.

Briefly describe the primary projects you're currently working on.

The primary projects I am working on include an international project to develop a tobacco prevention survey with adolescents in Jujuy, Argentina. This also involves training four Argentinean investigators in tobacco-related research. The second project is a survey of 1,200 women to determine how they understand communication of cancer risk between clinicians and themselves. The sample is stratified by ethnicity, and we will include Spanish and English

speaking Latinas. The scenarios being used include colorectal cancer screening, use of tamoxifen for prevention of breast cancer, and stopping PAP smears for women at age 65 or older. A third project is the evaluation of videoconferencing a medical interpretation program being implemented in the main public hospital in Alameda County. We plan to evaluate its use in an observational comparison design in the cardiology clinic, the primary care setting, and inpatient ward service. A fourth project is the Center for Aging and Diverse Communities, which is a center focused on minority aging research, which mostly involves development of minority investigators.

What are your major areas of research interest?

My major area of research interest is Latino and minority healthcare focusing on topics in cancer prevention and control. Patient/doctor communication is also an area of great interest to me.

What do you consider your most notable achievement?

My most notable achievement is the development and distribution of *Guía Para Dejar de Fumar*, which has now been printed four times. Well over a million copies have been distributed both nationally and internationally. This is a simple self-help guide to assist smokers quit smoking, written in very basic fourth-grade-level Spanish.

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

Part of my inspiration for my work comes from my father who was a dedicated clinician and academician who always reminded me to never give up seeing patients. As a distant colleague, I admire the work of David Hayes Bautista for taking important public

positions on controversial issues and standing by them even when there may be substantial pressure to back off. Finally, my colleague Eugene Washington inspires me for his dedication to finding the best possible way to get things done.

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

The most important issue related to Latinos and cancer is increasing access to adequate care once cancer is diagnosed. An equally important issue is continuing to promote smoking cessation and tobacco use prevention among Latinos.

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

The best way to address cancer prevention and enhance awareness of screening is to use the mass media, particularly the electronic mass media in getting messages out there. These should be accurate and evidence-based.

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

The single most important piece of advice I can give a young Latino who aspires to a career in the cancer field in the area of research is to get adequate training. Get the best possible research training you can from the best possible institution. Use the dedicated time for research training to do just that and develop these skills. There will be plenty of opportunities to give back and enhance the lives of Latinos in the U.S. We need high-quality investigators working in this field.



NOTICIAS Around Redes

The *Redes En Acción* Northwest Regional Network Center and the Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco (LCAT) teamed up to host the Tobacco Control for Latinos Seminar at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). Primary objective of the seminar was to foster communication among community-based organization leaders, health providers and researchers working on tobacco and cancer control issues among Latinos.

At the seminar, speakers addressed important tobacco-related issues and provided information to 29 members of San Francisco Bay Area organizations working with the Latino population. Presentations covered the LCAT mission and programs, Strengthening Tobacco Prevention Program, University of California Spanish/English Internet smoking cessation intervention study, UCSF Smoking Cessation Leadership Center, and environmental tobacco smoke as a key component to be addressed in tobacco control efforts.

John F. Alderete, PhD, a member of the *Redes En Acción* National Steering Committee who was cited in the last issue of the *Redes Report* for his professional achievements, has done it



Amelie Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator, receives the American Cancer Society 2003 Humanitarian Award. The presentation was made by, left, ACS CEO John R. Seffrin, PhD, and Ralph B. Vance, MD, FACP, President.

again. He has been chosen to receive the 2004 William A. Hinton Research Training Award of the American Society for Microbiology and American Academy of Microbiology.

Earlier, Dr. Alderete, a Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, was named Co-Chair of the Health Sciences Advisory Council of the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities (HACU).

Congratulations again, Dr. Alderete!

Bilingual smoking study available via Internet

Smokers who want to quit can join a bilingual (Spanish/English) study on the Web, which can be completed entirely via their computers. Major advantages to participants include not having to travel to the research offices, having access to the materials 24 hours a day and 7 days a week, and the ability to log on from anywhere in the world.

Professors from the Schools of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco and the University of California, San Diego are conducting the smoking cessation study, which is funded by the Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program.

Project Director Ricardo F. Muñoz, PhD, said, "During the first phase of the project we recruited over 4,500 participants from 75 countries, over 1,000 of whom were Spanish-speaking from other countries. However, we could use help in reaching the Spanish-speaking smoker in the U.S."

The smoking cessation Web site can be found at: www.stopsmoking.ucsf.edu or www.dejardefumar.ucsf.edu.

Smokers entering the site are first given a choice of language, and then asked to answer simple eligibility questions. Those who are eligible and who consent to participate are provided personal feedback to additional smoking-related questions.

All participants, whether eligible or not, will have access to the "Stop Smoking Guide" and the "Nicotine Replacement Information Document," which were used in the first phase of the study and helped many of the initial participants stop smoking.



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