



Redes researchers assess needs for 'cancer navigator' program

Redes En Acción researchers are working within communities across the country to investigate clinical records of Latina women in an effort to gather information that will help in the design of a new "cancer navigator" program.

The researchers from *Redes En Acción* Regional Network Centers are collecting breast and colorectal cancer screening and diagnostic data as part of a needs assessment to lay the foundation for the patient navigator program. The records audit is gathering information from clinics in San Francisco, San Diego, New York City, Miami, San Antonio and the Rio Grande Valley.

"We're looking at a number of factors that are specific to the cancer screening and diagnosis experience of Latina women," said Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes* Principal Investigator. "The goal is to provide rich information that will help *Redes En Acción* create an extremely effective patient navigator program tailored to this population."

Little is known about the decision-making process of Latina women once they're informed of abnormal mammography or colorectal screening results. In compliance with strict patient confidentiality requirements, researchers are conducting medical records chart audits in community and academic health centers in an effort to gain new insight into the knowledge, attitudes and beliefs that influence subsequent choices and decisions of Latina patients.

Investigators are examining various factors, such as adherence to interval screening, patterns of care, technical processes and timing of care following abnormal screening results. A focus will be on the adequacy of diagnostic services in association with related factors such as income, age, race, education, health insurance status, rural-urban residence and family cancer history.

At the six *Redes* sites, plans call for auditing more than 1,000 charts selected from a listing of abnormal mammography and colorectal cancer screening tests among Latino and non-Hispanic white individuals 40 to 80 years of age. Ultimately, the research is expected to lead to development of a culturally sensitive and effective cancer screening and care adherence program.

Redes network center moves to UT Health Science Center

The *Redes En Acción* National Network Center has moved from Baylor College of Medicine to The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), where Principal Investigator Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez will head the new Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR).

Dr. Ramirez has also been appointed the Dielmann Chair in Health Disparities Research and Community Outreach at the medical school and professor in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at UTHSCSA. In addition, she was named Director of Outreach and Health Care Disparities at the Cancer Therapy and Research Center (CTRC). UTHSCSA and CTRC are partners forming the San Antonio Cancer Institute, a National Cancer Institute-designated Cancer Center.

The IHPR will coordinate UTHSCSA health disparities research and outreach programs in San Antonio, the Rio Grande Valley and throughout South Texas. A primary goal of IHPR will be to research the causes and solutions for disparities in health affecting residents locally, regionally and nationally. Research and community outreach will include all chronic diseases, with special emphasis on cancer prevention and control.

"The IHPR will advance social and behavioral public health through a wide range of activities – research, training, education and outreach – at both the local and national levels," said Dr. Ramirez.

Dr. Ramirez's 12-member research team that comprises the *Redes* National Network Center also joined the UTHSCSA faculty and staff.

Redes En Acción: The National Latino Cancer Research Network is a major Community Networks Program 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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TRAINING

Lillian F. Jones, Houston, Texas

Interpreting success daily

The importance of communication between patient and provider is even more readily apparent when the two speak different languages. Lillian Jones, who sees this everyday at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center, has a ready answer when asked about the importance of qualified interpreters:

“Imagine yourself consenting to have surgery or any such life-threatening procedure and having to sign your consent form in Chinese. How important do you think it is to have a qualified English-speaking interpreter tell you what they’re going to do to you?”

Lillian, the Senior Medical Interpreter for the Language Assistance Department at M.D. Anderson, not only assists in interactions between patients and the array of medical and other personnel in

the Department of Hematology and various clinics, she also helps train new interpreters and serves as their mentor. Indeed, she developed the Interpreter’s Training Manual used in the department.



Over the course of training, Lillian is integral to the successful transition from new employee to trained interpreter, working with the individuals hands-on, placing them with other seasoned interpreters on their calls,

overseeing participation in a medical terminology course, and establishing a gradual schedule of solo interpretation work.

She describes the role of medical interpreter as “rewarding, interesting and satisfying. Our ultimate goal is for the optimum outcome regarding the patient’s health...It is very satisfying to know that at the end of the day we have made a significant difference in the life of another human being.”

NCI approves 2 new *Redes* pilot projects

Two pilot research projects were approved for funding through *Redes En Acción* in the latest round of National Cancer Institute reviews.

The pilot projects are:

- *Culturally Relevant Cancer Risk Counseling for Underserved Latinas*; Principal Investigator (PI) Martin A. Perez, PhD, of the Southwest Regional Network Center (RNC). The primary purpose is to evaluate the effects of a culturally relevant genetic cancer risk assessment (GCRA) intervention on a population of underserved women of Hispanic descent, and examine a social-cognitive-cultural model of post-GCRA cancer screening and prevention behaviors that can guide future GCRA and psychosocial interventions for this population.
- *Smoking Cessation in Spanish-Speaking Hispanics*; PI Carlos A. Mazas, PhD, Central RNC. The specific aims of this project are to examine the mechanisms underlying the process of smoking cessation and relapse among Spanish-speaking smokers and how these mechanisms are influenced by education and acculturation. The study will address these issues by examining real-time, momentary changes in potential mechanisms that include craving, affect, self-efficacy, expectancies, stress, coping behavior and social support in the natural environment.

AWARENESS

Olivia Fé, San Francisco, California

Lots of ‘God bless you’

Olivia Fé was working for a small organization that provided support services for Latinas with breast cancer when she was diagnosed with the disease herself. While undergoing treatment, she realized the need for a different kind of program – one that focused on early detection and education.



“I knew that by the time Latinas went to see a doctor because of a problem they were experiencing with their breast, many of them were being diagnosed in the later or terminal stages of cancer,” she says. “I also knew finding information in Spanish

that was linguistically and culturally appropriate was a challenge.”

The result? She and Janice Ruiz co-founded the Latina Breast Cancer Agency, and Olivia has served as Executive Director the past four years. One of the agency’s major success stories is *Mujeres Cuidando Mujeres* / Women Caring for Women, a patient navigator-driven program that focuses on education and provides screening services for Latinas living in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties. Since the program began, more than 2,000 women have received the free screening services.

The agency offers invaluable assistance, helping women schedule screening appointments, assisting with completion of necessary paperwork at the clinic, and providing translation services. If further assistance is needed after diagnosis, the agency continues to help in navigating the system.

And what do the recipients of these services give Olivia in return?

“Lots of ‘God bless you,’” she says. “To see the faces of the women we serve fills my heart with joy.”

RESEARCH

Juan Carlos Ramos, MD, Miami, Florida

Viruses and cancer

As an undergraduate biology student, Juan Carlos Ramos worked in a molecular biology laboratory dedicated to the study of cancer at the University of California, Los Angeles Johnson Cancer Comprehensive Center. Since then, he has remained interested in biomedical research and cancer.



After receiving his medical degree at the University of Medicine & Dentistry / New Jersey Medical School of New Jersey, he served a residency in internal medicine at UM / Jackson Memorial Hospital, where he later was a fellow in hematology / oncology and continued to pursue research in the field.

Today, Dr. Ramos is Assistant Professor of Medicine in hematology / oncology at the University of Miami School of Medicine, Sylvester Cancer Center, where he is a member of the Viral Oncology Program. His research

focuses on viral lymphomas related to Epstein-Barr Virus and HTLV-1 affecting immune-compromised patients and immigrants from areas where these viruses are endemic.

He is currently studying molecular determinants related to the pathogenesis and prognosis of these tumors. His primary goal is to find and develop therapeutic targets for the treatment of these viral-related cancers.

He works closely with Dr. William Harrington, Jr., Co-Director of the Viral Oncology Program, who has established National Cancer Institute-funded programs abroad and long-term collaborations with Brazil. In addition to his research activities and clinical duties at the Sylvester Cancer Center, Dr. Ramos has clinical responsibilities at Jackson Memorial Hospital, where he is Co-Director of the Viral Oncology Clinic.

Report to the Nation notes *Redes* role in cancer war

The role of *Redes En Acción* in the fight against cancer among Latinos is highlighted in a major report published in the October 15 issue of the journal *Cancer*.

The report is titled the *Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, 1975-2005, Featuring Cancer among U.S. Hispanic / Latino Populations*. *Redes* Principal Investigator Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, is a co-author.

“Redes En Acción: The National Latino Cancer Research Network is in the vanguard of U.S. programs seeking to bridge cancer disparity issues in Latinos,” the report notes in its Latino Outreach and Community Programs section.

The report found that for 1999 to 2003, Latinos had lower incidence rates than non-Hispanic whites (NHW) for most cancers, but were less likely than the NHW population to be diagnosed with localized stage disease for cancers

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CIS-related projects target underserved

Six R21 grants were recently awarded to stimulate research that explores effective messages, channels, outreach, promotional strategies and/or other interventions that increase the use and impact of existing cancer information resources such as the Cancer Information Service by minority and underserved populations.

The National Cancer Institute’s Health Communication and Informatics Research Branch of the Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences is funding the projects. Three of the studies include Latino populations as a target group.

Redes En Acción Co-Principal Investigators Maria Fernandez (Central Region) and Eliseo Pérez-Stable (Northwest Region) are Co-Investigators on two projects. The funded Latino studies are:

- *CIS Initiated Calls: Can We Enhance Information Services for Latino Patients?* Directed by Celia Kaplan, DrPH, and Eliseo Pérez-Stable, MD, both of the University of California, San Francisco. Target: Latino cancer patients and health professionals (community-based physician practices).
- *Sustainable Strategies for Increasing CIS Use among African Americans and Hispanics.* Directed by Matthew Kreuter, PhD, St. Louis University School of Public Health, and Maria Fernandez, PhD, University of Texas Health Science Center School of Public Health. Target: African Americans in St. Louis and Hispanics in South Texas.
- *ACCISS: Activating Collaborative CIS Support Services.* Directed by Bonnie Spring, PhD, Northwestern University Medical School. Target: African American and Hispanic women with abnormal PAP tests and their health care providers.

For more information about the studies, contact Dr. Ludmila Cofta-Woerpel, Cancer Information Service Senior Research Coordinator, at 713-745-4265.

In caring for her patients, Dr. Lopez goes the distance

At the Arizona-Mexico border, a rainbow appears over the town of Nogales, Arizona. Where walnut trees still grow in nearby hillsides and old Spanish missions dot the landscape is the Mariposa Community Health Center. In this town of 24,000, almost 90 percent of the residents are Hispanic. Many are underserved and poor.

Marietta is 45 years old and has cervical cancer. She lives with her family near the border in poverty, unable to make the long haul to Tucson to see an oncologist because the family's pickup truck won't go any further.



However, 65 miles away, Ana Maria Lopez, MD, MPH, FACP, an oncologist and Medical Director of the University of Arizona's Telemedicine Program, will see that Marietta receives state-of-the-art care without having to leave Nogales. While Marietta's physician at the Mariposa

Community Health Center performs a colposcopy exam of Marietta's cervix, Dr. Lopez will receive digital images of the procedure in real time to determine Marietta's next steps toward treatment.

Dr. Lopez and other telemedicine practitioners enable thousands of rural and poor Americans to receive the highest quality of cancer care and bring leading cancer experts practically to the patient's home. Patients living in rural areas unable to afford transportation to major medical institutions or who were previously "no shows" when it came to treatment are now being cared for.

An Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine and Pathology at the University of Arizona Cancer Center, Tucson, Dr. Lopez was the Principal Investigator of a pilot project funded by the National Cancer Institute's Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities through *Redes En Acción* focusing on the feasibility of telecolposcopy for cervical cancer. The UA Telemedicine Program performs consultations on as many as 2,000 patients a year.

Employing the use of satellite technology, telemedicine can broadcast a consultation between physicians at facilities in two

separate parts of the country or anywhere on the globe using video-conferencing equipment, and even utilize robotic technology for surgery. Diagnostic tools such as X-rays, CT scans and MRIs can be transmitted anywhere in the world.

"Getting proper access to care to rural patients and giving them state-of-the-art screening, diagnosis and treatment was always extremely challenging until now, and getting adequate screening for some patients sometimes takes almost an act of God," says Eladio Pereira, MD, FACP, Chief Internist and Medical Director at the Mariposa Community Health Center. "Dr. Lopez has brought the leading cancer center in Arizona to us."

Dr. Lopez is employing telemedicine to treat 50 of Dr. Pereira's patients and has set up a program for using telemedicine in the treatment and follow-up care of breast cancer survivors in the town of Nogales.

Ana Maria's warmth and compassion to her patients, which include members of Arizona's 28 Native American Indian tribes, is becoming widely known. Arizona Representative Raul Grijalva (D-Az) describes her as "exceptionally outgoing, a people person committed to her career who continues to strengthen her knowledge of medicine and the patients she serves."

In June, she made the cover of the magazine *Tucson Lifestyle* after being named among the city's top 247 doctors as selected by her peers, an honor she has received for several years in a row.

The next month, Dr. Lopez, along with colleague Ronald S. Weinstein, MD, demonstrated the use of telemedicine and new Web-based technologies at the White House. The meeting was composed of inter-agency medical directors from the White House, U.S. State Department, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation and other federal agencies.

"To care for people is an incredible privilege," says Dr. Lopez. "The secret is simply to care for your patient...if you keep that as your focus, you'll do the right thing."

This article was written by Francis X. Mahaney, Jr. for the National Cancer Institute Bulletin.

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of the lung, colon and rectum, prostate, female breast, and cervix. However, Latino children have higher incidence rates of leukemia, retinoblastoma, osteosarcoma, and germ cell tumors than do non-Latino white children.

The report also noted several important considerations in developing health interventions for Latinos, including higher incidence of some infection-related cancers; elevated exposures to environmental risk factors in Latinos' living and work places; and lower education, health literacy and income. Other considerations included limited English proficiency; reduced

use of screening services; limited access to health care, often due to lack of insurance; and less information available regarding possible genetic predisposition to cancer.

First issued in 1998, the *Annual Report to the Nation* is a collaboration among the North American Association of Central Cancer Registries, National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It provides updated information on cancer rates and trends in the United States.

The report's findings are based on 90 percent of the U.S. Latino population.

Redes researchers participate in landmark Latino project

Redes En Acción leaders will play key roles in the largest long-term epidemiological study of health and disease in Latin American populations living in the United States.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and other components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) recently announced contracts totaling \$61 million over 6 ½ years for the multi-site Hispanic Community Health Study.

In San Diego, one of the sites selected for the study, *Redes* Southwest Region Co-Principal Investigator Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH is Principal Investigator, and John Elder, PhD, MPH, a member of the *Redes* National Steering Committee, is the study site's Co-PI. Both are on the Graduate School of Public Health faculty at San Diego State University.

Also, in Miami, Frank J. Penedo, PhD, of the University of Miami Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center and *Redes* Co-PI for the Southeast Region, is a study Investigator.

As many as 16,000 participants of Hispanic origin – 4,000 at each of four sites – will undergo a series of physical examinations and interviews to help identify the prevalence of and risk factors for a wide variety of diseases, disorders and conditions.

The field study sites awarded contracts are San Diego, CA (San Diego State University); Miami, FL (University of Miami); Chicago, IL

(Northwestern University); and Bronx, NY (Albert Einstein College of Medicine of Yeshiva University).

Participants in the Hispanic Community Health Study will range in age from 18 to 74 and will be followed over time for occurrence of disease. The study will also determine the role of cultural adaptation and disparities in the prevalence and development of disease.



Dr. Talavera



Dr. Penedo

In line with the recommendations of a 2003 NHLBI report on epidemiological research in Hispanic populations, the study will recruit persons who identify themselves as Hispanics or Latinos, but will emphasize Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans and Central / South Americans.

“This is one of the largest, longest and most comprehensive multi-site studies of Latino health,” said Dr. Talavera. “We hope the findings of this research will lead to a number of breakthroughs and insights that will help maintain the health of this population in the coming decades.”

Noted Dr. Penedo: “I believe the NIH has taken a major step toward gaining a better understanding of factors associated with Latino health outcomes. The Hispanic Community Health Study will provide insight into similarities and differences in health behaviors and status, as well as outcomes among our diverse Hispanic community, and identify both risk and protective factors.”

New report addresses cancer in young people

A recent report concludes that a major and ongoing initiative emphasizing adolescent and young adult cancer clinical trials and outcomes research is “urgently needed.”

The report, *Closing the Gap: Care Imperatives for Adolescents and Young Adults with Cancer*, is the result of a collaborative effort between the National Cancer Institute and Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF) and its LIVESTRONG™ Young Adult Alliance.

The partnership established the Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology (AYAO) Progress Review Group, which produced the current report. Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator, is a member of the LAF Board of Directors and the AYAO Progress Review Group (PRG).

In calling for a strong research initiative to address AYAO issues, the report notes that “collaboration and support from numerous governmental, academic, public health, community-based and other private sector entities will be essential to its success.”

Closing the Gap is offered “as a blueprint for a focused and structured approach to improving cancer prevention, cancer care, and the duration and quality of life for this vital segment of our society,” the report states.

The implementation phase of the PRG process was to begin in November, when the LIVESTRONG™ Young Adult Alliance was to host its inaugural meeting, featuring discussions about ways the report recommendations can most effectively be realized.

Closing the Gap: Care Imperatives for Adolescents and Young Adults with Cancer can be accessed at the following site:

http://planning.cancer.gov/disease/AYAO_PRG_Report_2006_FINAL.pdf

NOTICIAS: AROUND REDES

Northwest Region

Dr. Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, Northwest Region Co-Principal Investigator, participated as an expert at the recent *NIH State-of-the-Science Conference of Tobacco Use: Prevention, Cessation, and Control* in Bethesda, Maryland. His discussion, *Innovations and Outreach to Latino Populations in the United States and Abroad*, was part of a series of presentations requested by the panel reviewing evidence for tobacco cessation and prevention interventions. Dr. Pérez-Stable reviewed the prevalence of tobacco use among Latino populations in the U.S. and how attitudes and beliefs may influence smoking and quitting behavior, and addressed issues of effective strategies for increasing consumer demand for and use of proven individually oriented cessation treatments.

PUBLICATIONS / PUBLICACIONES

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Ziv E, John EM, Choudry S, Kho J, Lorizio W, Pérez-Stable EJ, Burchard EG. Genetic Ancestry & Risk Factors for Breast Cancer among Latinas in the San Francisco Bay Area. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention.* 2006;15(10):1878-1885

NEW PROJECTS / NUEVOS PROYECTOS

As part of a community-based participatory research project, Drs. Anna Nápoles-Springer and Carmen Ortiz, researchers in the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Region, have collected pilot data to develop a training program and build community capacity to implement a breast cancer peer support counselor (PSC) program.

Dr. Nápoles-Springer is Program Coordinator of the *Redes* Northwest Regional Network Center, and Dr. Ortiz is Executive Director of *Círculo de Vida*, a culturally and linguistically appropriate outreach and support services program for Latinos with cancer. The PSC program would be based on the CDV model.

For the project, which is funded by the California Breast Cancer Research Program, the researchers are analyzing results from focus groups, key informant interviews and a telephone survey to identify aspects of the program that can be strengthened, recommended components for the training program, and optimal methods for integrating the PSC program into cancer care systems.



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