

Redes investigators to direct major new research projects

Leading *Redes En Acción* investigators and network researchers have received a variety of major grants to study wide-ranging and far-reaching health issues – from tobacco control to clinical trial participation to childhood obesity.

The research involves *Redes* scientists at work in regions around the country. Projects receiving funding include:

- Tobacco control research and training interventions in partnership with researchers in South America
- A comprehensive study of disparities, barriers and facilitators to participation in cancer clinical research trials in Florida
- A collaborative program to improve cardiovascular outcomes in low-income Latinos living along the U.S.-Mexico border near San Diego, California
- A new approach seeking environmental and policy solutions to escalating obesity rates among Latino children in the United States

Northwest Region

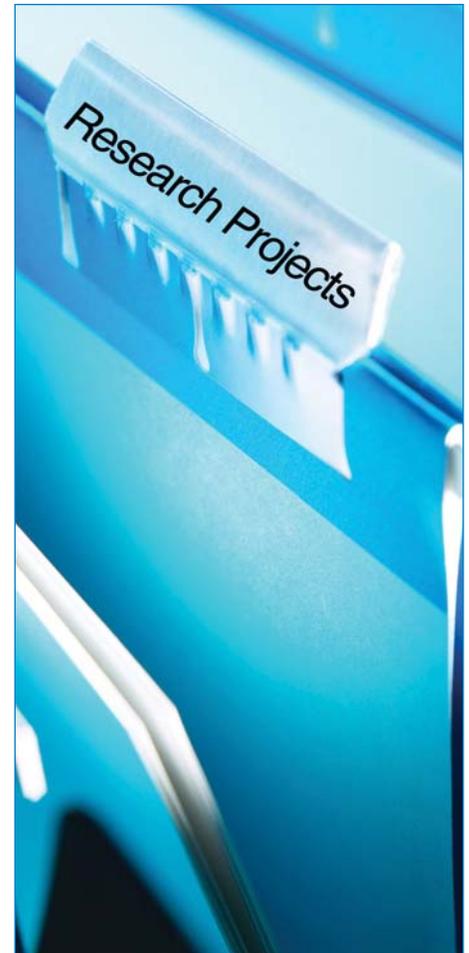
Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD, is the Principal Investigator (PI) of a 5-year, \$1.5 million study funded by the Fogarty International Center and National Institute on Drug Abuse titled

Tobacco Control Research and Training in South America. Dr. Pérez-Stable is Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) for the Northwest Region of *Redes En Acción*.

The research will be conducted in collaboration with investigators based in Jujuy, Tucuman and Buenos Aires, Argentina. The initial project is a community-based intervention that will target smoking initiation among adolescents in randomly selected schools in Jujuy (no smoke-free laws) and Tucuman (strict smoke-free laws).

The second project is a randomized intervention with clinicians in Buenos Aires to enhance their skills at smoking cessation treatments and evaluate outcomes in a sample of their patients. In addition, the grant features a training component bringing Argentine researchers to the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) for six to 12 weeks for specific projects and skill enhancement.

Dr. Pérez-Stable, UCSF Professor of Medicine, received his first grant from the NIH/Fogarty International Center for *Tobacco Use among Argentinean Youth: A Cohort Study* in 2002, and the latest R01 grant represents a competitive renewal of that project. The initial 5-year study collected data on 3,400 students (13 to 15 years old) to ascertain factors that predict smoking initiation.



Southwest Region

Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH, Co-PI for the *Redes En Acción* Southwest Region, is the Principal Investigator of a 5-year study, *San Diego Partnership to Reduce Diabetes and CVD in Latinos: Establishing Exploratory NCMHD Centers of Excellence*. The \$6.2 million project is supported by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD), which is part

Continued on page 5

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.

The *Redes Report* is produced quarterly by *Redes En Acción*: The National Latino Cancer Research Network, NCI Grant No. 1 U01 CA114657-01

A W A R E N E S S

Ivis Febus-Sampayo, New York, New York

Understanding Latina survivors

A 14-year breast cancer survivor, Ivis Febus-Sampayo understands what women diagnosed with cancer are going through. And she particularly understands the needs of Latinas undergoing this life-changing experience.

Ten years ago, she put her knowledge and experience to good use by joining SHARE: Self-Help for Women with Breast or Ovarian Cancer and becoming Director of the nonprofit organization's Latina program. For the past three decades, SHARE has provided much-needed education, support, advocacy and empowerment.

Because Latinas face many language, economic and cultural barriers, "we have to work harder to break the stigma of cancer within our community," says Ivis. "Latinos need to see the faces of survivorship. We need to understand that certain parts of our culture may strengthen who we are and yet sometimes



Photo: Maria Fernanda-Hubbeaut

hinder us by not truly understanding that we need to keep our health at the forefront."

Since joining LatinaSHARE, Ivis has worked to develop and expand services throughout the Latino community.

"When I first came to SHARE we had two support groups, yoga once a month, and one nutrition program," she recalls. "Today we have seven support groups, and we had 57 programs last year, as well as the largest Hispanic contingency to travel to Washington, DC for the National Breast Cancer Coalition's Advocacy Training."

What kind of feedback does she receive from women she's helped?

"¡Dios te bendiga! I am always hearing from our callers how it made a world of a difference in their lives to speak to or join other survivors," Ivis says. "Our community needs to learn that there is life after cancer. Through LatinaSHARE we show them daily that we are here to help them in any way we can and that we truly understand – you see, we have walked in their shoes."

R E S E A R C H

René Salazar, MD, San Francisco, California

Promoting colorectal cancer screening

Latinos are less likely than non-Hispanic whites to receive screening for colorectal cancer. Through his research, Dr. René Salazar is hoping to change that.

An Assistant Clinical Professor of Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, Dr. Salazar is leading a study titled *The Development and Evaluation of a Culturally Tailored Colorectal Cancer Education Video: Prevenir Antes Que Lamentar*. The 3-year study is supported by an American Cancer Society Cancer Control Career Development Award for Primary Care Physicians.



"The video addresses specific cultural barriers to colorectal cancer screening, which have been previously identified in Latinos, and attempts to educate the viewer by providing information in a *novela* format to capture audience attention and interest," he says. "The hope is that exposure to this video would lead to increased rates of colorectal cancer screening in a group that is currently screened at rates lower than non-Latino whites."

Dr. Salazar feels that cultural beliefs play a significant role in cancer screening compliance among Latinos. "Understanding these beliefs and developing strategies to address these beliefs is essential in developing cancer control programs for Latinos," he says.

Culturally sensitive materials targeting Latino patients are very important in addressing cultural barriers to screening, he believes. "Just as important, however, is increased awareness of such barriers to providers who offer screening," he stresses.

In addition to his colorectal cancer screening study, Dr. Salazar's research interests include patient navigation to improve access for cancer treatment services for diverse communities, cultural competency and diversity in medical education.

HONORS & AWARDS

Dr. Ramirez elected to Institute of Medicine

Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator, was recently honored with election to the prestigious Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies. The National Academies serve as independent advisers to the nation on science, engineering and medicine.

Dr. Ramirez, a nationally recognized leader in research of cancer disparities affecting Latinos and other populations, is a Professor of Medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio and Director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research.

“I am extremely honored to be recognized by my peers, and I look forward to joining them in their efforts to address and improve the health of U.S. residents,” Dr. Ramirez said. “In particular, I am excited to be able to bring my experience in health disparity and behavioral intervention research to the table to help bridge the gap of health care for those who are at a disadvantage due to race / ethnicity or social determinants, such as education, income or proximity to



Celia Thompson (left) and Dr. Amelie Ramirez

medical care.”

The National Academies consist of the Institute of Medicine, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering and the National Research Council. Election recognizes those who have made major contributions to the advancement of the medical sciences, health care and public health.

Ford and Komen honor *Redes* ‘Warrior in Pink’

When Celia Thompson was diagnosed with breast cancer, little did she know that an even greater shock was in store – when she learned a few months later that her 30-year-old daughter also had the disease.

Now cancer-free alongside her daughter, Celia was recently recognized by Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the leader in the breast cancer movement, and Ford’s Warriors in Pink campaign for her courageous spirit and strength in battling her own cancer while supporting and inspiring her daughter.

Celia is very familiar to those in the *Redes* “family” around the country. A long-time administrative assistant to *Redes* Principal Investigator Amelie Ramirez, DrPH, she has played a major role in the annual National Steering Committee meeting and other *Redes* activities over the years.

Diagnosed with Stage 1 breast cancer

in 2005, Celia approached her cancer journey with a positive attitude, prayer and a fighting spirit, which she would need in the months to follow. Early in her treatment regimen, she encouraged her daughter, Jessica, to get a mammogram.

Jessica had just finished her medical school residency at Mt. Sinai Hospital in New York. As a physician, she was aware of breast cancer risks, but it didn’t prepare her for the shock of learning two weeks later that she had Stage 3 breast cancer.

Receiving treatment concurrently, Celia would travel to New York on the off weeks of her treatment program to support her daughter. She found the strength to fight for both of them, and this odyssey produced a watershed of love in their relationship.

Since then Celia has shared her story privately and publicly, touching the lives

of many people and encouraging the Hispanic community to educate themselves about breast cancer and early detection.

“Breast cancer doesn’t set age limits – it can affect any family – and it’s important that the Hispanic community understand this and talk about it,” she says. “I’m honored that Ford has selected me as a Warrior in Pink and I hope I can use this to empower Hispanic women to step up and fight like a warrior because together we can eradicate this disease and make sure it doesn’t touch our mothers, daughters and loved ones ever again.”

This year Ford honored three Hispanic Warriors in Pink, donating \$1,000 in each of their names to Komen for the Cure in the hope that all women will find the warrior spirit inside of them and no other family has to lose a loved one to breast cancer.

HONORS & AWARDS

Dr. Greg Talavera earns recognition

Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH, *Redes En Acción* Co-Principal Investigator for the Southwest Region, has collected three honors and awards from San Diego State University (SDSU) and the San Ysidro Health Center.

Dr. Talavera and John Elder, PhD, MPH, a member of the *Redes* National Steering Committee, were presented the SDSU Presidential Top 25 Award. Both are members of the SDSU Graduate School of Public Health faculty. Faculty, staff and members of the community are eligible for the award, which honors individuals for their achievements.

Dr. Talavera earned the award for his role as site Principal Investigator for the national multi-site *Hispanic Community Health Study*, one of the largest, longest and most comprehensive Latino health research projects ever initiated. The 6 ½-year, \$61 million study is supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and other components of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

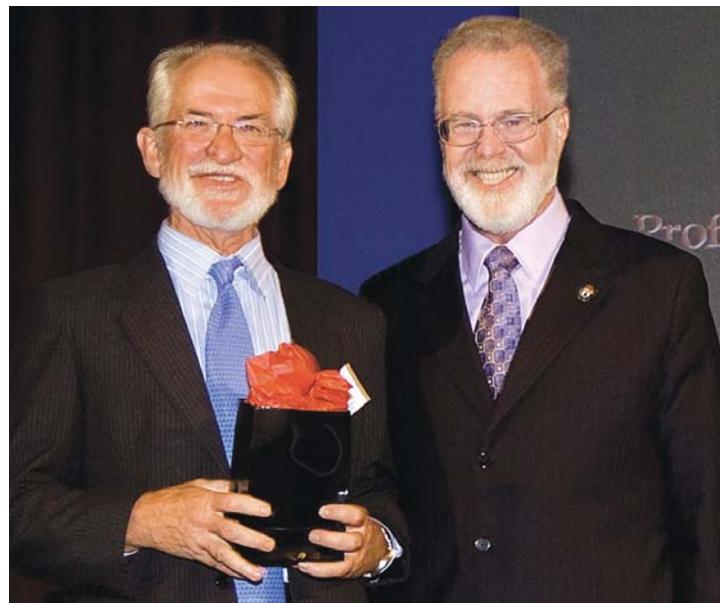
Dr. Elder, a site Co-PI for the *Hispanic Community Health Study*, was honored for his work with the *Aventuras para Niños* program. Dr. Elder directs the NIH-supported program, which recruits and trains community *promotoras* to coach parents, teachers and merchants in Latino neighborhoods about the benefits of healthy eating and physical activity.

In addition to the SDSU Top 25 Award, Dr. Talavera was honored for his contributions to the San Ysidro Health Center First Annual Latino Health Leadership Summit.

He also received a Certificate of Appreciation for his “committed support of the SDSU McNair Scholars Program and...efforts to enhance the academic opportunities of students.”

The new awards are the latest in a series of honors for Dr. Talavera this year. Earlier, the *Redes* Co-PI received the 2007 Public Health Champion Award by the County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency, Public Health Services for “extraordinary achievement protecting and promoting all people of San Diego County.”

In addition, he was honored for Alumni Excellence by the University of California, San Diego and the UCSD Hispanic Scholarship Council at the 10th Annual *Fiesta de las Estrellas*. *Fiesta de las Estrellas* was created by the UCSD Hispanic Scholarship Council to raise scholarship funds for students, while also recognizing the achievements of the local community “*Estrellas*” – outstanding San Diego leaders who are making a difference for Latinos.



SDSU President Stephen L. Weber (right) honors Drs. Greg Talavera (top) and John Elder with the Presidential Top 25 Award.

New research

Continued from page 1

of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The San Diego Latino Research Center of Excellence is a trilateral collaboration of San Diego State University (SDSU), the San Ysidro Health Center (SYHC) and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). The study represents a major new effort to promote and expedite intervention research that improves cardiovascular outcomes of Latinos in the Southern California border region.

In partnering with the San Ysidro Health Center, the intervention aims to provide significant service to 1,700 Latino diabetics.

Earlier this year, Dr. Talavera and *Redes En Acción* researchers Frank J. Penedo, PhD, Co-PI of the Southeast Region, and John Elder, PhD, MPH, a member of the *Redes* National Steering Committee, assumed key roles in the largest long-term epidemiological study of health and disease in Latino populations in the United States. The multi-site *Hispanic Community Health Study* was funded by a \$61 million grant over 6 ½ years by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute and other NIH components.

National Network Center

Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* PI and Director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, will direct a nationwide effort to fight obesity in Latino youths. The project, *Salud America! The National Latino Childhood Obesity Prevention Research Network*, is funded by a 5-year, \$5.2 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Based at IHPR, the network aims to unite and increase the number of Latino scientists engaged in research on Latino childhood obesity. The study



will seek environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic.

“At least 15 percent of Latinos under age 19 are obese, heightening their risk of heart disease, cancer and other chronic disease,” said Dr. Ramirez, the project’s PI. “Many factors, from genetics to poor diet to low family income and no health insurance, contribute to the problem.”

Initially, *Salud America!* is forming an executive workgroup of a dozen stakeholders committed to Latino childhood obesity research. The workgroup will identify and prioritize key issues, recruit a network of 150 members by the end of the program’s first year, survey those members to further refine priorities, and plan a summit to draft a Latino childhood obesity research agenda in fall 2008.

Salud America! is also developing a system to support up to 20 pilot research projects, each funded up to \$75,000. The goal of these projects will be to inform obesity-prevention efforts tailored to the specific needs of Latino children, their families and communities. Key findings will be communicated to scientists, policymakers and the public.

Also, to enhance the research skills of young scientists, seasoned researchers and existing childhood obesity experts, the network will offer training to aid investigators’ career

progression and grant-seeking efforts. By the end of the fifth year, the network expects to have 750 members.

Southeast Region

Margaret M. Byrne, PhD, will serve as PI of a 2-year study funded by the Bankhead Coley Foundation, *Understanding Disparities and Barriers to Participation in Cancer Clinical Trials among Floridians: A Health Behavior Population-based Approach*. The focus of the project will be to determine the extent and causes of disparities in clinical trial participation.

Researchers will first examine statewide rates of cancer clinical trials participation at the county level using the Florida Cancer Data System and the National Cancer Institute Clinical Trial Cooperative Groups participation data. The study will then survey cancer patients to determine cancer patients’ beliefs, attitudes, and perceived barriers and facilitators to participation in clinical trials.

Finally, investigators will survey health care providers and researchers to assess attitudes toward clinical trials, perceptions of patients’ willingness to participate, and barriers and facilitators faced by providers in identifying and referring patients to trials. Research results will guide recommendations for improving rates of participation in cancer clinical trials.

NCI Web site provides cancer risk information

Doctors often cannot explain why one person develops cancer and another doesn't. But research shows that certain risk factors increase the chance that a person will develop cancer.

While many risk factors can be avoided, others, such as family history, cannot. Latinos can help protect themselves by staying away from known risk factors whenever possible.

To learn the plain and simple truth about cancer risk for six common cancers, steps to lower risk, tips for understanding cancer news stories, and tools to manage cancer risk, visit the National Cancer Institute's *Cancer Risk: Understanding the Puzzle* Web site at www.understandingrisk.cancer.gov. This interactive site also offers definitions of risk, tools to help measure risk and diverse patient stories that allow you to test your knowledge of risk factors.

While overall cancer mortality rates (death rates) for women are lower in the Latino population compared with the non-Hispanic white population, cancer mortality rates are higher in Latina women for lung and breast cancers. Although cervical cancer incidence (new cases) and mortality rates have declined about 50 percent in the United States over the past three decades, incidence rates for Latina women are



higher than those for non-Hispanic women.

Screening tests for female cancers are underutilized by Mexican American women, although use has increased in recent years through targeted intervention programs. The American Cancer Society reports that Latinos aged 50 and older are less likely to have had a recent screening test for colorectal cancer than non-Hispanic whites (29.9% vs. 44.3%). Understanding the risk factors will help in making informed decisions about how to lower risk.

NCI's Spanish-language Web site (www.cancer.gov/espanol) has more detailed information regarding cancer. For additional information on understanding cancer risk, contact your local Cancer Information Service Partnership Program at 1-800-4-CANCER.

PUBLICATIONS / PUBLICATIONES

Ramirez, A.G., Chalela, P., Gallion, K., Velez, L.F. (2007). Energy balance feasibility study for Latinas in Texas: a qualitative assessment. *Preventive Chronic Disease*, 4, (4),1-12

Gallo, L.C., Espinosa de los Monteros, K., Ferent, V., Urbina, J., Talavera, G. (2007). Education, psychosocial resources, and metabolic syndrome variables in Latinas. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 34(1):14-25

Stephenson, M.T., Velez, L.F., Chalela, P., Ramirez, A., Hoyle, R.H. (2007). The reliability and validity of the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS-8) with young adult Latino workers: implications for tobacco and alcohol disparity research. *Addiction*, 102, (Suppl. 2)79-91



The *Redes Report* is produced quarterly by *Redes En Acción*: The National Latino Cancer Research Network, NCI Grant No. 1 U01 CA114657-01

National Network Center Principal Investigator

Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH
University of Texas Health Science
Center at San Antonio
8207 Callaghan Rd. Ste. 353
San Antonio, Texas 78230
Phone: 210-562-6200
Fax: 210-348-0554
E-mail: ramirezag@uthscsa.edu

Regional Network Centers Northeast RNC

J. Emilio Carrillo, MD, MPH
Co-Principal Investigator
Weill Medical College,
Cornell University
New York, New York

Phone: 718-250-8394

Southeast RNC

Frank J. Penedo, PhD
Co-Principal Investigator
Sylvester Comprehensive
Cancer Center
University of Miami, Florida
Phone: 305-243-3981

Central RNC

María Fernández, PhD
School of Public Health
University of Texas
Health Science Center
at Houston
Houston, Texas
Phone: 713-500-9626

Northwest RNC

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, MD
Co-Principal Investigator
University of California,
San Francisco
San Francisco, California
Phone: 415-476-9933

Southwest RNC

Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH
Co-Principal Investigator
Graduate School of Public Health
San Diego State University
San Diego, California
Phone: 619-594-2362

National Hispanic Medical Association

Elena Rios, MD, MSPH
Washington, DC

Program Consultants

Alfred L. McAlister, PhD
Lucina Suarez, PhD

We welcome your news items,
story ideas and suggestions.

Please send them to:

RedesEnAccion@uthscsa.edu.

Visit us online at www.redesenaccion.org