

New resource details pioneering Hispanic health status review

A new report on the health status of one of the nation's heaviest concentrations of Latinos found a striking level of adult obesity – higher than in the rest of the nation – and therefore a greater disease risk, particularly for diabetes but also for heart disease and some cancers.

The study, for the first time ever, provides in a single document detailed statistics of dozens of health conditions to illustrate the disparities by age, sex and race/ethnicity for South Texas' 38 metropolitan and non-metropolitan counties, the rest of Texas and the nation.

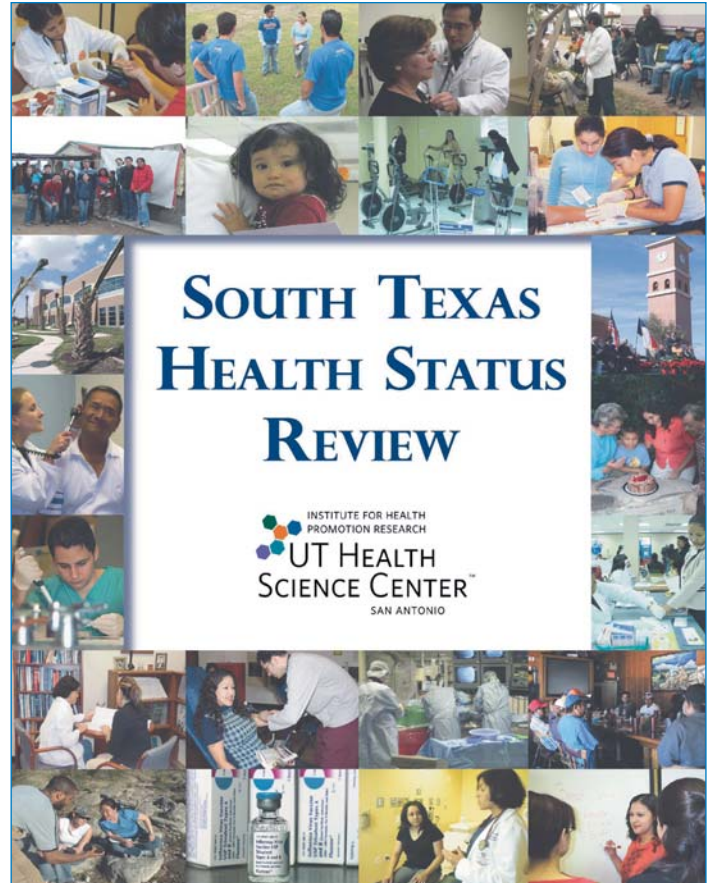
The South Texas Health Status Review was recently released by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA). The report was a collaboration of IHPR, the Regional Academic Health Center of UTHSCSA, and the Texas Department of State Health Services.

Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, Principal Investigator of *Redes En Acción*, is Director of the IHPR, which investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and other chronic diseases among Latinos in San Antonio, in Texas and the nation.

"Latinos are the fastest-growing group in the United States, and the numbers are expanding in every area of the country," said Dr. Ramirez. "This segment of our population is having a huge socio-economic impact not only nationally, but in regional and local areas across the country, and that influence is only going to grow in the years ahead.

"That's why it is absolutely paramount that we learn more about the health status and level of disparity that exists among Latinos. This study will be of enormous benefit to our efforts in Texas, as well as in leading the way to a broader understanding nationally of the implications of the explosive emergence and growth of the Hispanic population."

The area examined in the report encompasses the Texas-Mexico border counties, metropolitan areas such as San



Antonio and Corpus Christi, and a large rural section of South Texas. Of the region's 4 million residents, two-thirds are Latino. Compared to the rest of the state, this population has less income, education and access to health care. In addition, one-third of adults in the region lack health insurance.

For the report, researchers analyzed a wide range of health status indicators falling into the following categories: 1) communicable diseases, 2) behavioral risk factors, 3) cancer incidence / mortality, 4) maternal and child health, 5) chronic diseases, 6) environmental factors and 7) injury.

The goal of the study was to examine these health status indicators to determine if disparities exist either between the South Texas population and the population in the rest of Texas or among South Texas subpopulations.

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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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A W A R E N E S S

Maria Teresa Dube, La Pryor, Texas

On a personal mission

For Maria Teresa Dube, educating others about breast cancer preventive measures and early diagnosis isn't just a job – for her it's personal.

As a child in rural South Texas, she lost her father and two brothers to cancer at an early age. Seven years ago, she faced a new crisis: her own diagnosis of breast cancer.

"I am most inspired because God gave me a second chance and this is my way of giving something back," says Maria. "So many people out there just don't know that early diagnosis can save their life."

A breast cancer survivor and long-time community educator, Maria has been Clinical Coordinator at *Vida Y Salud*-Health Systems, Inc., in Crystal City the past four years. Prior to that, she served in various capacities with Our Health / *Nuestro Centro de Salud* in Uvalde.

Over the years, she has worked tirelessly as a breast cancer advocate / volunteer, as well. She is a regular participant in

the Relay for Life campaign, and has been actively involved in breast cancer awareness efforts in the La Pryor school district and local community centers. She is also a coordinator for the Tell a Friend Campaign and a volunteer for Reach to Recovery, a one-on-one breast cancer consultation program.



The satisfaction of her mission comes from "knowing that I have helped at least one more person and being a survivor, thanks to God, which allows me to be able to come to work," says Maria. "I just feel very blessed and fortunate..."

Some of those whose lives she's touched over the years have become her friends. "They are grateful that someone else shared their experience with them and survived, which makes them feel and be more optimistic," she says. "It is easier for someone to talk to a cancer survivor who has been through what they are going through now. Some people have told me that no one else understands how they are feeling."

R E S E A R C H

Elva M. Arredondo, PhD, San Diego, California

Cancer prevention behaviors

With research targeting health disparities, Dr. Elva Arredondo is working to better understand and address individual and environmental contributors to the high obesity rates seen in Latino communities.

One of her current studies, *Promoting Physical Activity among Church Going Latinas (Caminando con Fe)*, is a two-year project supported by the National Cancer Institute.

"This is a multi-level intervention," says Dr. Arredondo. The aim is to "promote more physical activity among church-going members and advocate for environmental changes that facilitate physical activity."

Born and raised in Mexico, she came to this country as a

teenager and ultimately received her PhD from Duke University. She is currently a Research Scientist at San Diego State University, where, in addition to her research activities, she mentors psychology and public health graduate students.

Dr. Arredondo's research specifically involves cancer preventive behaviors in monolingual Spanish-speaking and bilingual populations. Current research interests are



centered on the cultural influences and psychosocial mediators of preventive practices, including cervical cancer screening, physical activity and dietary practices among underserved patients.

In their cancer prevention efforts, Latinos face "individual-level barriers (e.g., socio-economic, knowledge) and structural barriers (e.g., biases in the medical system, lack of access to adequate care)," says Dr. Arredondo. "We need to use multi-level approaches in our cancer prevention efforts."

Further, she believes it is extremely important for these efforts to be culturally appropriate. "Interventions that have not been culturally tailored are not likely to effectively reach the targeted community," she emphasizes.

TRAINING

Fernando Fireman, MD, MS, Brooklyn, New York

Opening the door to research

Earning an MD degree and obtaining residency and clinical experience in Brazil, Dr. Fernando Fireman came to the United States with a strong medical foundation. His training during a *Redes En Acción* internship has helped him gain research experience, and more.

“My experience as an intern was extremely gratifying, not just in my career, but also in my personal life as a Latino,” he says. “I was exposed to how essential it is to have health professionals, especially in research, who are culture-sensitive and know the particular characteristics of a minority ethnic group.”

During his *Redes* internship, he participated in a study of the Hispanic pediatric population in the Pediatric Hematology / Oncology division at The Brooklyn Hospital Center. He also assessed Hispanic children cancer data in this country using software from SEER / NCI, and researched and developed the bibliography review of the Pediatric Cancer and Clinical Trials in the U.S. to design a pilot project.

For the past three years, Dr. Fireman has served as a Clinical Research Associate at The Brooklyn Hospital Center, managing and updating Children Oncology Group (COG) protocols. In addition, he manages clinical data from all patients enrolled on COG protocols and coordinates other



research studies of the division.

He describes the need for training / mentorship programs such as *Redes En Acción* as “essential to increase the number of researchers who know well the ethnic group he/she works with.

“It is well known that every ethnic group has its own cultural and genetic profile, making it crucial that researchers be knowledgeable about the specificities of a minority – and nobody is better than a member of this minority,” he notes. “To create researchers with this pedigree, programs such as *Redes En Acción* are fundamental.”

Summit seeks Latino cancer testimonials

Testimonials of Latino cancer patients and/or their families on their cancer experience are being sought for the *National Latino Cancer Summit: Science Meets Service, Moving Forward Together*, scheduled July 30-August 1, 2008 in San Francisco, California. *Redes En Acción* is partnering with Latinas Contra Cancer to host the event.

The goal of the summit is to bring together cancer researchers, health policy experts, community activists, cancer survivors and health professionals to focus attention on cancer and cancer care disparities among Latinos in the United States.

The event will provide an opportunity to hear the latest in groundbreaking cancer research and best practices as they relate to Latinos and cancer.

The summit will aim to initiate a dialogue between researchers and Latino communities broadly defined in mobilizing efforts to increase research participation, reduce disparities, and improve cancer care and quality of life for Latinos living with cancer and their families.

A key component of the conference will be the Latino cancer testimonials. Summit participants are invited to submit their testimonials on bilingual forms provided on the event Web site.

A final report will be sent to the agencies that collaborate with *Latinas Contra Cancer*, as well as to other key stakeholders and lawmakers, to promote future research, policy and legislation that impact access, treatment and survivorship.

Also, oral and poster presentations are invited for the summit. The abstract deadline for these presentations is April 4.

For more information about the National Latino Cancer Summit, registration, testimonial submission, abstracts and other aspects of the event, please go to the [summit information web page](#).

New NCI/ASCO card aids displaced cancer patients

The National Cancer Institute and American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) have developed a wallet card that is being piloted with oncologists in the Gulf Coast states, home to one of the fastest-growing Latino populations in the country.

The wallet card guides displaced cancer patients to ASCO's [patient information Web site](#) and NCI's Cancer Information Service (CIS) national toll-free number (1-800-4-CANCER), LiveHelp instant messaging service, and e-mail service available at [www.cancer.gov/help](#). In addition to all services being available in English, the toll-free number and e-mail service are provided in Spanish as well.

"Connecting patients from all over the country to cancer information and clinical trials is what NCI's CIS does every day," said Madeline La Porta, CIS Deputy Director. "Our collaboration with ASCO will help reconnect displaced patients and doctors after a natural disaster so they can get the information they need."

In addition to listing NCI and ASCO resources, the card also provides space to write the patient's name, diagnosis and treatment to communicate vital information to health care providers.

This collaboration builds upon a successful partnership in 2005 in response to the devastation caused by hurricanes Rita and Katrina. NCI and ASCO worked closely to provide the toll-free CIS phone number and Web-based resources to help displaced doctors and their cancer patients contact each other to ensure continued care.

"Continuity of care is crucial to the health and well being of people with cancer," said ASCO President Dr. Nancy E. Davidson. "ASCO is pleased to partner with NCI to ensure that people with cancer across the United States can access the high-quality care that they need, no matter what the circumstance."

Before developing the card, ASCO conducted a formative evaluation of the concept and prototype of the wallet card among oncologists and oncology nurses who attended the Oncology Nursing Society Annual Congress, the ASCO Annual Meeting and an ASCO Committee Meeting. ASCO staff reported that all of the attendees surveyed at their annual meeting agreed that such a resource would be valuable for their patients.

The card will be piloted over the next year – to include the 2008 hurricane season – with oncologists in the Gulf Coast states. An evaluation of the pilot will help determine whether

Linking you to us

LINKING cancer patients to their doctors in a disaster

For help during a natural or national disaster when you can't reach your doctor, contact the following resources to find out how to access care:

National Cancer Institute (NCI)
[www.cancer.gov](#)
 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)
 Patient Web site: [www.plwc.org](#)

Front

Please print the following information

Name: _____

Diagnosis: _____

Date of diagnosis: _____

Treatment regimen: _____

Back

A partnership of ASCO and NCI

Our new wallet size card will proactively alert cancer patients, physicians and other allied health professionals displaced by natural or national disasters of the availability of "real-time" urgent services through NCI's Cancer Information Service (1-800-4-CANCER national, toll-free number, LiveHelp, and Email Web services) and ASCO's Message Board.

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE

ASCO
 AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY

Flyer promoting NCI/ASCO wallet card for cancer patients

the program is expanded to cover other geographic areas or other potential disasters.

"When I received the e-mail about this program, I was very excited," says Coleen Booker, a registered nurse and coordinator for the GI Oncology Center at the University of Florida Shands Cancer Center in Gainesville.

She recalls how after Hurricane Katrina, cancer patients from New Orleans came to Florida. Their medical records had been destroyed, and sometimes patients didn't know how to spell their doctor's name, making it difficult to determine their true diagnosis, medical history and best course of treatment.

"But it's not just about catastrophes," she says. "With this program, if people come to Florida on vacation or as snowbirds to live for half of the year, these cards will make it much easier for us to help them."

Oncology practices in the Gulf States can order copies of the card by calling CIS at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237). Quantities may be limited.

NOTICIAS: AROUND REDES

Central Region

Daisy Y. Morales-Campos, a PhD student at the University of Texas Health Science Center-Houston School of Public Health and a *Redes En Acción* intern, has been awarded the ASPH / CDC / PRC Minority Fellowship for a two-year period (2007-09). Her proposed study employs focus groups and a survey to examine acceptability of the HPV vaccine among Hispanic adolescents and their parents living in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.



The fellowship program, initiated by the Association of Schools of Public Health (ASPH) through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Prevention Research Centers (PRC) program, supports fellowship positions for minority doctoral students. The intent of the program is to enhance the preparation of future public health professionals from ethnic and racial minorities by providing unique training opportunities in prevention research.

Northwest Region

Anna Nápoles-Springer, PhD, Co-Investigator with the *Redes* Northwest Region, presented in the California State University Los Angeles – City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center (COH) Collaborative Distinguished Speaker series. Her presentation was entitled *Ethnic Disparities in Psychosocial Health among Women with Breast Cancer: Are Latinas at Higher Risk?*

Eliseo Pérez-Stable, MD, *Redes* Northwest Region Co-Principal Investigator and Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine at the University of California, San Francisco, is this year's faculty / academic recipient of the UCSF Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award. The award recognizes exceptional leadership in furthering the goal of achieving greater ethnic diversity at UCSF.



The award was developed by the Office of the Chancellor, Office of Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity / Diversity and the Dr. King Commemoration Committee to recognize campus members for extraordinary leadership and inspiration in advancing the goals of social and economic justice.

NEW PROJECTS / NUEVOS PROYECTOS

Central Region

Supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a project titled *Intervention to Increase Screening for Cervical Cancer in Women of Mexican Descent – Phase 3* is a collaboration among a community health advisory group, *promotoras* (community lay health educators), and the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHSC-H).

The two-year study is led by **Drs. Maria E. Fernandez**, Co-Principal Investigator and Assistant Professor at the UTHSC-H School of Public Health, and **Theresa Byrd**, Associate Professor at the UT School of Public Health El Paso Regional Campus, who is the Lead Investigator and founder of the AMIGAS program. Dr. Fernandez is Co-PI of the *Redes* Central Region.

The AMIGAS program is designed to create awareness of cervical cancer among immigrant Mexican women in the United States. Project participants

will be from El Paso, Houston and Yakima Valley, Washington. The selected cities represent three types of communities: U.S.-Mexico border, urban and rural. If AMIGAS is shown to be effective in increasing rates of cervical cancer screening, researchers will work toward full adoption, implementation and maintenance of the intervention program.

Southeast Region

Frank J. Penedo, PhD, Co-PI of the *Redes* Southeast Region, is Principal Investigator of the *Prostate Cancer Assessment and Treatment Health Study (PATHS)*, a 5-year National Cancer Institute-funded longitudinal study that is evaluating quality of life trajectories and health outcomes among men who have been diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Disproportionately burdened by prostate cancer, ethnic minority men tend to have poorer quality of life, more indicators of disease burden and

lower survival after treatment. However, limited information exists on how psychosocial (e.g., coping, social support, stress) and sociocultural (e.g., ethnic identity, cultural values such as familism, acculturation) factors may impact adjustment to the second-leading cause of cancer-related death among Hispanic and African American men.

In addition, growing literature suggests that psychosocial factors may be associated with adjustment to treatment and disease activity in cancer populations via endocrine and immunological pathways. This study will assess the relationship among psychosocial, cultural, endocrine and immune mechanisms among ethnically diverse participants. This is one of the first studies to systematically access a series of factors that may be related to quality of life and health in this population, guiding future secondary prevention work among ethnic minority men diagnosed with prostate cancer.

New Hispanic health status review

Continued from page 1

For 12 of the health conditions studied, South Texas was at a disadvantage compared to the rest of the state. For another 16 conditions, incidence / mortality rates or prevalence in South Texas were either similar to or lower than the rest of Texas. Also, incidence rates for many of the health indicators were higher in South Texas Hispanics than non-Hispanic whites.

Conditions for which South Texas showed a higher incidence or prevalence than the remainder of the state included adult obesity, adult diabetes, child and adolescent

leukemia, and cancers of the cervix, liver, stomach and gallbladder. For both adult obesity and diabetes, the prevalence was higher than for either the rest of Texas or the nation.

“This truly is the roadmap of health disparities in South Texas,” said Dr. Ramirez. “We hope this report provides information that will stimulate and shape research and interventions to counteract these disparities and bring health parity to those who need it most.”

The South Texas Health Status Review will soon be available on the IHPR Web site at ihpr.uthscsa.edu.

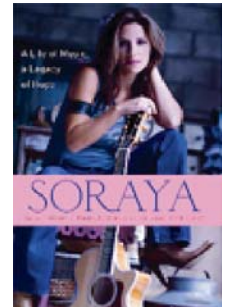
Soraya legacy keeps fighting breast cancer

The inspirational Latina singer / songwriter Soraya, who lost her life to breast cancer in 2006, devoted much of her life and energy to the fight against the disease. It should come as no surprise that, even in death, she is still contributing to the cause.

In accordance with her wishes, 80 percent of the proceeds from her recently published memoirs, *Soraya: A Life of Music, a Legacy of Hope*, will go to Susan G. Komen for the Cure.®

Soraya, a longtime ambassador for Komen – and a good friend of *Redes En Acción* over the years – served on the front lines in the battle against breast cancer after her diagnosis at age 31 – the height of her career. As Komen for the Cure noted on its Web site, “She spent the rest of her life using her music, her voice, and her formidable talent to raise awareness and educate women in Latin communities about the disease.”

Komen founder Nancy G. Brinker is quoted on the Web site: “Soraya never stopped teaching us, not even in the darkest hours when her cancer returned. As she neared the end of her journey, Soraya reached into her soul and found just the right words to capture her spirit. Soraya left us far, far too early. But like her angelic voice that moved us all, her music and her mission live on.”



PUBLICATIONS / PUBLICACIONES

Fernandez ME, Wippold R, Torres-Vigil I, Byrd T, Freeberg D, Bains Y, Guajardo J, Coughlin SS, Vernon SW. Colorectal cancer screening among Latinos from U.S. cities along the Texas-Mexico border. *Cancer Causes Control*. 2008 Mar;19(2):195-206. Epub 2007 Nov 24



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