



# Redes En Acción

The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network

## Joining forces to target breast, cervical cancers

**B**reast cancer is the number one cancer killer of Latina women, and cervical cancer rates are more than twice as high among Latinas as in the non-Hispanic white population. No wonder *Redes En Acción* has placed high priority on these two cancers.

**Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.**  
To promote breast and cervical cancer among Hispanic women, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and *Redes En Acción* have joined forces to launch a Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program. The program will provide free Pap smears and HPV testing to eligible women in underserved communities. The program is being implemented in several states, including California, Texas, and Florida.



## 16 Redes Pilot Projects Approved

To open the door for new Latino-oriented cancer research, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) – through the Cancer Research and Biometrics Branch – has approved 16 pilot research projects, totaling \$900,000 in funding. These projects are community-based and are part of the *Redes En Acción* initiative.

## Community partners united in war on cancer



# COMMUNITIES IN ACTION EN ACCIÓN

As part of the research experience, *Redes En Acción* pilot research provides unique networking and research career opportunities for researchers. The program has allowed researchers to work closely with Latino investigators, offering mentorship and enhancing their research skills and cancer prevention and control efforts.

## Redes Training Program: Opening Doors for Future Researchers



## Students give to the community

Two *Redes En Acción* regions have provided invaluable training to students. They also offer significant benefits to the communities they serve. At the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), 4th year medical students are pioneering a new concept in cancer awareness among Latinos. In addition, "ambassadors" in the ambassador program, which was part of the UTHSCSA Community Ambassador Program, which was part of the Hispanic Center of Excellence. In their role as "ambassadors," new cancer education resources, including the media, Latino cancer families, and the general public. Each year, the students are called to public education functions, radio and television interviews, and community organizations. "Through this program, we've

## Redes leverages funding to attract \$20M for research

**R**edes En Acción-related cancer research projects at both the national and regional levels have surpassed \$20 million in funding from public and private sources. In addition to the initiative's highly successful pilot projects program, over the past four years, *Redes En Acción* researchers have directed or participated in research through advertisements or shared resources – to name a few examples.

# Targeting Latino Cancer Health Disparities

## Redes looks to communities for input on cancer issues

To obtain community feedback on a broad array of Latino cancer issues, *Redes En Acción* has surveyed over 1,200 opinion leaders and physicians. More than 600 respondents to the Redes Opinion Leader Survey, the majority working in cancer-related fields, primarily representing community organizations, academic institutions and cancer centers. Individuals surveyed include researchers, community and Latino health advocates.

## Komen and Redes Partners in the Promise of Hope



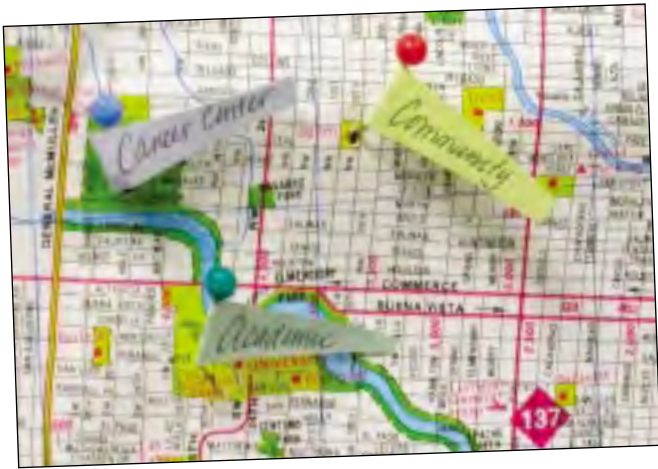
In the *Nuestras Historias* project, the Komen Foundation and *Redes En Acción* have joined forces to address the needs of Latino breast cancer survivors. The project aims to provide support and resources to these women and their families.

**REDES HIGHLIGHTS**  
Impact in the Community



# Partnerships

## Community partners united through *Redes* in war on cancer



In its first four years of activity, *Redes En Acción* has developed community partnership relationships with more than 1,800 organizations, cancer centers, academic institutions and agencies located throughout the initiative's six nationwide regions.

The partnership database compiled regionally has provided an invaluable resource for conducting *Redes En Acción* activities, including development of Latino cancer research, training and public education opportunities. The National and Regional Network Centers have used this database in various ways to identify partners for diverse roles, such as assisting in program development, participating in research surveys and providing input on community health agendas.

Within their communities, regional *Redes En Acción* coordinators have teamed with individuals and organizations in the partnership database in a broad array of Latino cancer prevention and control and public education projects.

## Komen and *Redes*: Partners in the Promise of Hope



In the *Nuestras Historias* project, the Komen-*Redes* collaboration relates the experiences of Latina breast cancer survivors.

Women have no greater ally in the war on breast cancer than the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Sharing the same goals in this battle, *Redes En Acción* and the Komen Foundation have joined forces often over the past four years, partnering in community-based breast health initiatives to address issues confronting Latinas and other medically underserved women and their families.

A prime example is a pilot study that began with San Antonio Cancer Institute funding titled Impact of Breast Cancer on the Hispanic Family. This pilot led to a larger-sample-size investigation funded by the Komen Foundation called Psychosocial Study of Breast Cancer Survivorship and Genetic Testing among Breast Cancer Registry Members.

The study identified key psychosocial variables that influence effective communication of breast cancer risk information and genetic screening among members of Latino families with hereditary breast cancer. Data from both studies will be published, used to develop education materials and programs, and also used as baseline data for new research.

In yet another Komen-supported project,

*Nuestras Historias Mujeres Sobreviviendo el Cancer del Seno/Our Stories: Latinas Surviving Breast Cancer*, *Redes En Acción* is developing a culturally sensitive book describing the Latina breast cancer experience in the words of survivors. This bilingual book tells the inspirational stories of 25 South Texas Latinas and offers breast health resource information for women everywhere.

A study with strong potential for a broad impact on underserved women of all races and ethnicities is the Breast Cancer Education Materials and Programs Development project. In the initial phase, led by *Redes En Acción* and supported by the Komen Foundation, tailored survey instruments to investigate knowledge, attitudes and behaviors regarding breast cancer genetics among five diverse populations (Latinos, Native Americans, African Americans, Appalachians and Asian/Pacific Island Americans) were developed and pre-tested. In future phases, thousands of women in these special population groups will be surveyed, with the final results used in the design and dissemination of culturally appropriate breast cancer genetic education materials.

## Redes En Acción: The National Hispanic/Latino Cancer Network

[www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org)

*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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# CIS and Redes: A Model for Collaboration

When *Redes En Acción* teamed with the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service (CIS) recently on a new public education project aimed at promoting cancer clinical trial awareness in Hispanic/Latino communities, it was just the latest in a series of successful cooperative ventures for the two partners.

Since the inception of *Redes En Acción* in 2000, the CIS has played a vital role in the initiative's wide-ranging cancer research, training and awareness efforts. From the CIS perspective, the relationship, which is based on collaboration and reciprocity, is an excellent example of CIS efforts to bring education about cancer control to partner organizations that serve minority and medically underserved communities.

The CIS has contributed to *Redes En Acción* efforts in the following areas:

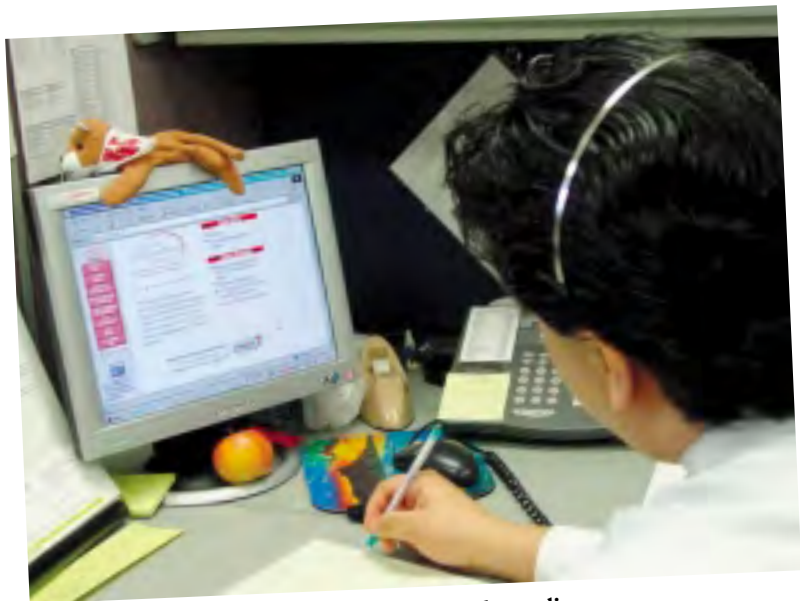
- **Partnership development:** Helping identify and recruit appropriate partner organizations and individuals to join the *Redes En Acción* network.
- **Media campaign support:** Helping develop and disseminate *Redes En Acción*'s national Hispanic cancer awareness PSAs (a mass media campaign).
- **CIS-based research:** Using the CIS 1-800 number in the PSAs and subsequent monitoring, analysis and reporting of calls generated by the media campaign.
- **Network promotion:** Assisting in developing

content for the *Redes En Acción* newsletter and in its distribution, and promoting activities through presentations.

- **Survey support:** Helping identify participants in the *Redes En Acción* Key Observer Survey, as well as monitoring responses and follow-ups.
- **Pilot project promotion:** Promoting the *Redes En Acción* pilot project RFAs and collaboration in other specified research projects.

In addition, the CIS has also assisted *Redes En Acción* in promoting a novel outreach approach by staffing community health fairs and distributing hundreds of copies of a *fotonovela* that focused on raising awareness among Latinos about early cancer screening measures.

The latest joint activity, the Clinical Trials Outreach for Hispanics based on the National Cancer Institute's Clinical Trials Education Series, has been implemented



CIS information specialists participate in *Redes* studies.

in communities within four *Redes En Acción* regions with high concentrations of Latinos: California, Florida, Texas and New York. The outreach module, delivered in a variety of community settings, includes a bilingual slide presentation, video and educational print materials.

# Community input a priority for genetics summit

## *Redes En Acción* coordinates first-ever Hispanic/Latino Genetics Community Consultation Network summit meeting

Representatives of Latino communities across the nation and leaders of the nation's top federal government health institutes have broken new ground in a historic two-day national summit meeting coordinated by *Redes En Acción*. In the first-of-its-kind conference ever held, participants in the Hispanic/Latino Genetics Community Consultation Network Summit (HLGCCN) in Washington, D.C. focused on genetics issues of primary concern to our nation's 38 million Latinos.

More than two years in the planning, the summit meeting brought together 120 Latino genetics researchers, program administrators, government workers and community leaders to discuss the current status of genetics research/services with regard to Latinos and determine recommendations for the future. The summit served as a participatory model for involving Latinos in identifying and discussing genetics issues and examining those that are of greatest significance to the Hispanic/Latino population.

Recommendations prioritized by the HLGCCN participants were delivered in the context of research, health care services, professional education and training, and public education and outreach. Response to the recommendations by leaders of three major components of the National Institutes of Health in attendance was overwhelmingly positive.

Andrew C. von Eschenbach, MD, Director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), summed up the feelings of his colleagues when he told participants that federal author-



**Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, *Redes En Acción* Principal Investigator, second from left, joins members of the National Institutes of Health panel at the HLGCCN summit: (l-r) Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD, Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute; Judith H. Greenberg, PhD, Acting Director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences; and Andrew C. von Eschenbach, MD, Director of the National Cancer Institute.**

ities "need your advice, your guidance, your leadership, your contributions..."

Added Francis S. Collins, MD, PhD, Director of the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), the training of minority researchers and building the bridge for their delivery into the Hispanic/Latino community have been lacking in the past, but "this is a high priority for us and I take your agenda very seriously. It's ambitious, it's awesome and (it's impressive to see) the very exciting plans you have collectively put together."

Judith H. Greenberg, PhD, Acting Director of the

National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), said the community consultation summit "exceeded my wildest dreams...The enthusiasm of the participants makes me hopeful that the momentum will continue."

The conference was the result of a combined effort of *Redes En Acción* and Baylor College of Medicine, with the NCI, NHGRI and NIGMS.

Playing support roles within NCI were the Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE), Cancer Genetics Network (CGN) and Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities (CRCHD).



# Prevention/Education

## Clearing the Smoke

### Redes' diversified attack takes aim at Latino tobacco use

**F**rom the very beginning *Redes En Acción's* mandate has been to form and engage alliances in cancer research, training and community awareness activities. Over the past four years, the initiative's efforts to address tobacco use among Latinos have involved all three approaches.

Researchers at both the National and Regional Network Center levels have launched smoking prevention and cessation interventions in communities around the country. For example, in a program called *Sin Fumar*, *Redes En Acción* researchers partnered with a local health agency and the city's school district in Laredo, Texas to give middle school and high school students tools to avoid the smoking habit.

In another research project, the Mass Media Intervention to Reduce Youth Smoking, *Redes En Acción* researchers worked with the University of Vermont to develop a comprehensive mass media campaign. With the help of children and teens, TV and radio ads were produced to reduce the prevalence of cigarette smoking among youths in grades 4 through 12 in San Antonio, Texas and Miami, Florida.

In regional research sites, *Redes En Acción* investigators have conducted a number of tobacco-related initiatives, such as Using Tobacco Industry Marketing Research to Develop New Tobacco Control Interventions for Young Adults in the *Redes En Acción* Northwest Region and Smoking



among Latinos, the *Redes En Acción* team has been extremely active, participating in a wide variety of community events. For instance, in the North Central Region, *Redes* coordinators assisted the Sioux City and Lexington, Nebraska local Tobacco Control Coalitions in conducting several tobacco prevention and control workshops for community organizations. And in the Northwest Region, the outreach coordinator wrote and directed a play for elementary schools titled "Kids to Kids: Campaign Against Tobacco."

Prevention for Latino Middle School Students in the Southwest Region. And through *Redes En Acción*, the National Cancer Institute has funded pilot projects such as Smoking Cessation in Latinos Using Pharmacotherapy in the Southwest Region.

On the training front, *Redes En Acción* and the Latino Council on Alcohol and Tobacco (LCAT) teamed to create a national network of experts, researchers and community-based organizations to address tobacco use. LCAT and the Regional Network Centers have conducted 14 community leadership seminars that have trained over 350 key community opinion leaders in tobacco prevention and control and have assisted local communities in identifying Latino tobacco research priorities.

And in efforts to raise public awareness about the risks and danger of



## Educating co

To aid community cancer prevention efforts, *Redes En Acción* has developed an array of educational tools designed to raise awareness of cancer risk and screening resources available to

The initiative's *Buena Vida* publications – 24-page English/Spanish language, culturally appropriate print pieces – offer basic information about topics such as breast and cervical cancer, clinical trials, screening procedures, and the importance of diet and exercise. In addition, they include phone numbers and Web sites where more information is available.

In a novel outreach approach, *Redes En Acción*

# Joining forces to target breast, cervical cancers

## Redes' community activities promote regular screening

**B**reast cancer is the number one cancer killer of Latina women, and cervical cancer rates are more than twice as high among Latinas as in the non-Hispanic white population. No wonder *Redes En Acción* has placed high priority on these two cancers in its research and community awareness efforts.

Indeed, eight of the *Redes* initiative's 16 pilot research projects funded by the National Cancer Institute are focused on breast and cervical cancer issues. These studies, which in many cases are helping encourage Latino investigators in their early cancer research careers, are scattered throughout the *Redes En Acción* regions.

At the National Network Center level, *Redes En Acción* researchers have worked to promote breast and cervical cancer early detection in Latino communities. In a research project supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the *Redes* team trained community health

personnel in Texas and Nevada in local programs aimed at increasing the number of underserved Latina women who seek the services of the CDC's National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program.

To promote breast and cervical cancer awareness among Latinas, the National Network Center has produced visually appealing, culturally tailored print publications providing basic information about the diseases and how women can protect themselves through regular screening.

Public education efforts conducted by *Redes En Acción* regional coordinators across the country have been strong as well. In the Southeast Region, for example, *Redes* staff



*Redes En Acción* encourages regular mammography screening.

and the Cancer Information Service participated in a breast cancer forum at Miami Dade College, providing information about the burden of breast cancer among Latinos and *Redes En Acción* efforts to combat disparities.

In the Northeast Region, *Redes En Acción* collaborated with the American Cancer Society to provide breast cancer educational information to about 400 Brooklyn community residents. ■

## Communities: *Redes* raises cancer awareness

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with a marketing agency and Western Union to produce a *fotonovela* – a soap opera magazine – that focused on raising cancer awareness among Latinos. The storyline featured a family dealing with breast cancer, and top international Latino talent was used to portray the characters in the novela. *Redes En Acción* and the CIS 1-800-4-CANCER phone information services are included in the booklet as health resources available to Latinos.

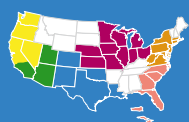
Helpful Latino cancer educational information is also available through the *Redes En Acción* newsletter, the *Redes Report*. To date, more than 300,000 copies of the quarterly newsletter have been distributed nationwide.

Another venue for Latino cancer information, and particularly for in-depth information about *Redes En Acción* research, training and awareness activities, is the initiative's Web site: [www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org). A popular feature of the site is the downloadable electronic files of the *Redes En Acción* newsletters,

*Buena Vida* publications and other print products.

The various publications and Web site are components of the *Redes En Acción* program's overall public communication effort, which also includes a national mass media campaign, professional presentations and conferences, community events, and CIS communication activities. These public communication activities are intended to reach multiple audiences, including the lay public, cancer researchers, physicians and other health care personnel, educators, health communicators, community-based organizations and the media.

In addition, Regional Network Center staffs around the country have raised cancer awareness in the public through more than 350 regional and local community events. These events include health fairs, children's anti-smoking campaigns, breast cancer awareness efforts, and participation at neighborhood health centers and school events.



# Research

## Educating Latino communities about clinical cancer research

Of all participants in National Cancer Institute studies, Latinos represent less than 6 percent, as compared with about 85 percent representation by non-Hispanic whites. To address this disparity, *Redes En Acción* has made public education about the value of clinical trials a high priority.

The initiative is involved in clinical trial issues on several fronts, with wide-ranging education and research projects including:

**National Media Campaign.** In 2001-02, *Redes En Acción* produced several bilingual television and radio public service announcements (PSAs) and launched a nationwide public awareness campaign informing Latinos about the availability of cancer studies and benefits of participation in clinical trials. The following year saw *Redes En Acción* take the campaign, which had relied on non-paid airtime donations by national TV/radio media, to another level of exposure by conducting a comparison study, using combinations of the PSAs, paid advertising spots and public relations.

**Clinical Trial Outreach Campaign.** *Redes En Acción* and the Cancer Information Service are collaborating on an effort to raise awareness in Latino communities about clinical trials. Bilingual presentations in various community settings at several *Redes En Acción* regional sites include slides, a video and print materials.

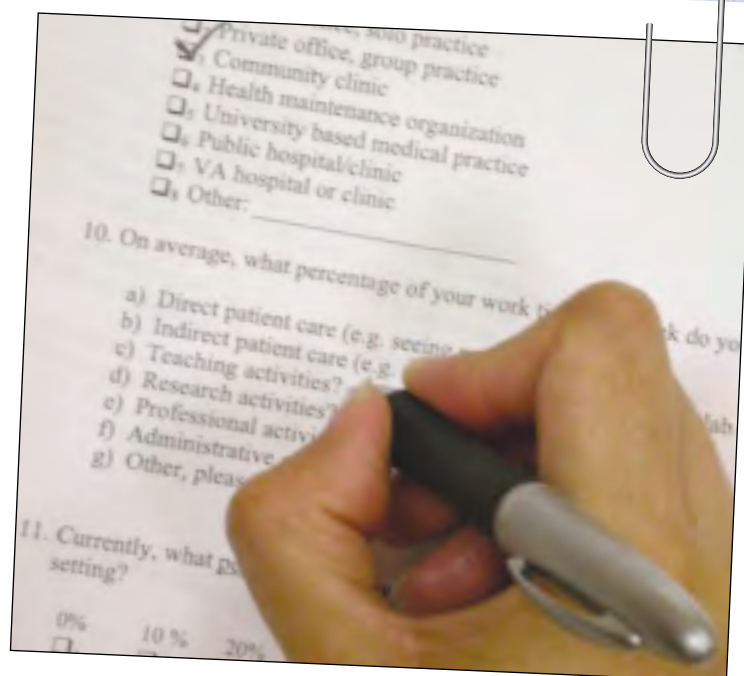
**Buena Vida: A Guide to Family Cancer Research.** A bilingual publication providing information about cancer and the importance of medical studies in the fight against the disease was produced and distributed by *Redes En Acción*, with Texas Cancer Genetics Consortium (TCGC) support. Subsequently, the *Buena Vida* publication has become the focus of a collaborative project involving *Redes En Acción*, the NCI Cancer Genetics Network (CGN) and TCGC. The project is studying the publication's effectiveness in educating the public and increasing Latino participation in the CGN Registry.

**Early-Phase Trial Study.** By addressing cultural and other barriers to early-



phase clinical trial participation, a two-year study recently initiated will benefit both cancer patients and research oncologists. The research project, Increasing Early-Phase Clinical Trial Accrual among Hispanics in South Texas, will identify barriers to Latino participation in clinical research and develop interventions to help reduce these obstacles.

**The National Hispanic/Latino Genetic Community Consultation Network.** Supported by the National Institutes of Health, this *Redes En Acción*-coordinated project resulted in a national summit meeting of Latino stakeholders in genetics issues and leaders of the major federal health institutions last year. Primary purpose of the community consultation conference was to identify and prioritize genetics issues on research, education and health care delivery affecting the Hispanic/Latino population.



## Redes looks to communities for input on cancer issues

To obtain community feedback about a broad array of Latino cancer issues, *Redes En Acción* has surveyed over 1,300 key opinion leaders and physicians nationwide.

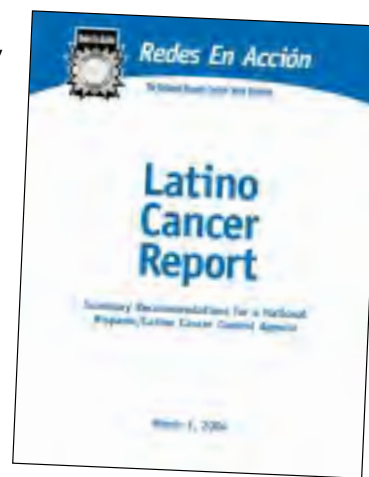
Of more than 600 respondents to the *Redes En Acción* Key Opinion Leader Survey, the majority work with Latinos in cancer-related fields, primarily representing community-based organizations, academic institutions and cancer centers around the country. Individuals surveyed include researchers, educators, health professionals and Latino health advocates.

According to the research survey, the top five cancer issues affecting Latinos were 1) access to cancer screening and care, 2) tobacco, 3) patient/doctor communication, 4) nutrition and 5) risk communication. Respondents ranked the most important cancer sites with regard to Latinos as breast, cervical and lung, followed by colorectal, prostate, liver and stomach cancers.

Results of the survey were incorporated into the *Redes En Acción* Latino Cancer Report, recently made available to health policy makers and the public.

The *Redes En Acción* Physicians Survey, which queried both Latino and non-Hispanic providers in states around the country, sought information about demographics, medical background, type of patients and language use in their practices, smoking cessation treatments, cancer screening practices, genetic testing and clinical trials.

Among the findings was a lack of consensus among physicians, particularly Latinos, that clinical trials are good for their patients. Of the 744 doctors surveyed, only 53 percent of Latinos and 63 percent of non-Hispanic whites agreed that sufficient scientific value and benefits exist for them to refer patients to clinical trials. Forty-three percent of Latino respondents and 32 percent of non-Hispanic whites reported that they had never participated in clinical trials. ■



Download at [www.redesenaccion.org](http://www.redesenaccion.org)

# 16 *Redes* Pilot Projects Approved

To open the door for new Latino-oriented cancer research, the National Cancer Institute (NCI) – through the *Redes En Acción* initiative – has approved 16 pilot research projects, totaling \$900,000 in funding. The majority of these new studies are community-based research projects, conducted in *Redes En Acción* regions across the United States.

Of the 29 proposals that emerged from the *Redes En Acción* review process and were forwarded to the NCI, the 16 approved for funding have given the program a strong 55 percent success rate.

As a requirement of the program, all of the projects have the potential to produce results that can be leveraged into subsequent peer-reviewed funding, such as an R01 NIH-type proposal. Indeed, the results of an early pilot project – South Carolina Partnership for Cancer Prevention – have already led to a larger study, titled Navigating the U.S. Health Care System, funded by the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services.

Another requirement of the pilot program is that the studies address one or more of the following cancer sites: breast, cervical, lung, colorectal or prostate.

As part of the research experience, the *Redes En Acción* pilot research program provides unique networking and cancer research career opportunities for junior researchers. The program has allowed these researchers to work closely with experienced Latino investigators, offering mentorship that enhances their research skills and knowledge of cancer prevention and control among Hispanic/Latino populations.

“The *Redes En Acción* pilot project has afforded me the opportunity to develop relationships, build trust and create an infrastructure that will provide a solid foundation for future collaborative research projects with the Latino community,” noted Deborah Parra Medina, PhD, who directed the South Carolina Partnership for Cancer Prevention study.

## *Redes En Acción* Pilot Projects

Project Title	Principal Investigator	Region
South Carolina Partnership for Cancer Prevention	Deborah Parra-Medina, PhD	Southeast
Primary Prevention of Cervical Cancer among Hispanic Women: The HPV Connection	Isabel C. Scarinci, PhD, MPH	Southeast
Smoking Cessation in Latinos Using Pharmacotherapy	Gregory A. Talavera, MD, MPH	Southwest
Coping and Quality of Life in Latino Cancer Patients	Martin Alberto Perez, PhD	Southwest
A Community Intervention to Improve Colorectal Cancer Screening Rates among Latinos	Ana Nátale-Pereira, MD	Northeast
Colorectal Cancer Screening: Identifying Barriers to Screening in the Latino Population	Monica Yepes-Rios, MD	Southwest
Enhancing the Participation of Latinas in Breast Cancer Support Groups	Anna Nápoles-Springer, PhD	Northwest
Feasibility of Telecolposcopy in a Gynecology Clinic	Ana María Lopez, MD, MPH	Southwest
Prostate Cancer Diagnosis Treatment in Latino Men	Thomas Denberg, MD, PhD	Northwest
Perception of Skin Cancer Risk in Hispanic Students	Robert Kirsner, MD	Southeast
Barriers to Colorectal Cancer Screening in Hispanics	Mark S. Johnson, MD, MPH	Northeast
The Natural History of Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Infection in Aging Women	Concepción Diaz-Arrastia, MD	South Central
Mammographic Breast Density as a Risk Factor for Breast Cancer	Elad Ziv, MD	Northwest
Increasing Hispanic Enrollment in Gynecologic Cancer Prevention Trials: A Linguistically Competent Approach	Francisco Garcia, MD	Southwest
Surgical Cultural Competency Cancer Education Program	Debbie Salas-Lopez, MD	Northeast
Latinas' Perception of Genetic Testing on Breast and Ovarian Cancer	Carlos Sandoval-Cros, MD	Southeast

## *Redes* leverages funding to attract \$20M for research

**R**edes En Acción-related cancer research projects at both the national and regional levels have surpassed \$20 million in leveraged funding from public and private sources.

In addition to the initiative's highly successful pilot project program, over the past four years *Redes En Acción* researchers have directed or participated in – through subcontracts or shared resources – 56 new or ongoing cancer projects.

Communities have benefited from the research agenda represented by these studies in a variety of ways: preventing or reducing smoking among youths in local schools, promoting area breast and cervical cancer screening services, preventing obesity in Latino home and community environments, tailoring a pain relief program to

Latino cancer patients, and providing clinical trial education to underserved women, to name a few examples.

While 15 of those research projects – totaling more than \$5 million in funds – have been initiated by the National

Network Center, 41 more have been generated by *Redes En Acción* researchers at the initiative's six regional sites around the country.

The cancer studies all rely, to varying degrees, on support from *Redes En Acción*, ranging from mentorship by a *Redes En Acción* investigator or staff personnel to full direction and leadership by the initiative's National Network Center or Regional Network Centers.

The research projects address a wide array of Latino cancer issues, including genetics, cancer risk communication, clinical trial participation, smoking, screening, nutrition, and language and other barriers to care. Specific cancers targeted in investigations include breast, prostate, cervical, lung and colorectal cancer.

The aim of the *Redes En Acción* program is to develop research opportunities that engage investigators – both Hispanic and non-Hispanic – in cancer research that yields new information on cancer issues relevant to Latino populations. In addition, the initiative has been successful at helping open doors for research funding for young investigators.





## Redes Training Program: Opening Doors for Future Researchers



Junior faculty trainee Demetrio Mamani, MD, left, works in the clinic with mentor Dr. Alexander Miller.

**O**ver the four years since *Redes En Acción* was initiated, 101 young Latinos have taken advantage of opportunities to train with established cancer researchers and receive mentorship that may not have been available to them otherwise. Importantly, as researchers and health professionals of the future, many of these students and junior faculty will almost certainly exert a positive impact on Hispanic/Latino communities in the years to come.

The training component of the *Redes En Acción* mission has promoted cancer-related education activities for undergraduate and graduate student interns, pre- and post-doctoral individuals, and junior faculty.

The unique experience of working closely with investigators in *Redes En Acción* and in pilot projects and affiliated cancer research, plus the mentorship provided, has enhanced their research skills and knowledge of cancer prevention and control in Hispanic/Latino populations. In addition to promoting the cancer research careers for more advanced trainees, the program has provided impetus for undergraduates to pursue advanced degrees in the health sciences and motivational incentive for participants at all levels.

"This experience has greatly impacted my passion

for reaching out to the Latino community and making a positive difference," said Veronica Gutierrez, an intern in the Southwest Region who, as a result of her *Redes* training experience, has gone on pursue her Master's in Public Health degree.

The training program throughout *Redes En Acción's* six regions has presented a wide variety of opportunities to gain valuable hands-on experience. For example, intern projects have included development of grant proposals, manuscripts and surveys; statistical programming/analysis; literature reviews; and data collection in such areas as tobacco research and Latino health issues. Pre- and post-

doctoral trainees have worked in community health promotion, clinical trial recruitment, data analysis, cancer genetics issues, and other research-related projects.

*Redes En Acción* training guidelines require that funded junior faculty individuals work toward developing a pilot project application, grant proposal or a manuscript for publication in an academic peer-reviewed journal. Those in unfunded positions work closely with *Redes En Acción* investigators and other Latino researchers on cancer prevention and control projects.

In addition to the impact of the *Redes En Acción* training program on the lives of these young people, it will almost

certainly pay impressive dividends in the field of cancer research for future generations of Latinos and society overall.

## Students give back to the community

**T**wo *Redes En Acción* regional programs not only have provided invaluable training for students, they also offer significant benefits to their communities.

At the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UTHSCSA), 4th year medical students are pioneering a new concept in promoting cancer awareness among Latinos. In all, 17 students (the "other" category in the accompanying table) have been part of the UTHSCSA Community Cancer Ambassador Program, which was implemented by the school's Hispanic Center of Excellence.

In their role as "ambassadors," the students offer a new cancer education resource for the community, including the media, Latino cancer patients and families, and the general public. During the academic year, the students are called upon for a variety of public education functions, including health fairs, radio and television interviews, and presentations to community organizations.

"Through the program, we're teaching our students to be culturally and linguistically competent, patient centered and community minded," said Martha A. Medrano, MD, MPH, Director of the Hispanic Center of Excellence and *Redes En Acción* Co-Principal Investigator for the South Central Regional Network Center.

One of the top priorities for the student ambassadors is patient education. The program partners with the Patient Education Department of the Barrio Comprehensive Family Health Clinic in San Antonio to allow students to give cancer presentations to patients. In addition, students are learning how to develop bilingual handouts about cancer-related topics.

Another regional program, the *Redes En Acción* and Science Enrichment Program Partnership in the Southwest Region, has trained high school students as community health advisors for cancer prevention and control.

Under the direction of *Redes En Acción* researchers at San Diego State University, the program was initiated to 1) educate traditionally underrepresented students in math and science as well as cancer prevention, 2) provide them with skills to function in their communities as community health advisors and 3) encourage adoption of desirable personal health behaviors.

Students have received education targeting major modifiable cancers, specifically those cancers related to smoking and nutrition. In addition, the program has provided information about smoking cessation and healthy nutrition-related behaviors, and links to local and national general health and cancer resources. The program has also focused on effective communication methods to allow students to deliver health-related information to their communities by volunteering as health advisors.

<b>Redes En Acción Training Program</b>
Junior Faculty (funded)
15
Junior Faculty (unfunded)
12
Pre- / Post-Doctoral
23
Interns (funded)
19
Interns (unfunded)
15
Other
17