10 Years (and Counting!): Latinas v. Breast Cancer

Julie La Fuente Louviere of San Antonio has fought — and survived — three bouts of breast cancer. She doesn’t let cancer keep her down.

The wife and mother of two lost weight, ran a half-marathon, celebrated 25 years of marriage, turned 50, become a grandma, and watched her oldest daughter graduate from law school.

“Survivorship means I am able to wake up every morning and be a wife to my husband, a mom to my girls, a glam’ma to my grandson and loving aunt and sister,” Louviere said. “It means I can be an active part of the present and never take life’s moments for granted.”

Louviere is among the 16 local Latina survivors who are celebrating a decade of cancer survival, triumph, and resiliency as part of the 10th anniversary of Nuestras Historias.

Nuestras Historias, a 2004 booklet with English/Spanish essays by Louviere and other Latina cancer survivors, was produced by Redes En Acción, a national Latino cancer research network funded by the National Cancer Institute and based at Dr. Amelie Ramirez’ Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

To celebrate Nuestras Historias and its 10-year anniversary, Redes created brand-new “then and now” photos, stories, and videos of the Latina breast cancer survivors from Nuestras Historias.

Survivors and their families also were honored at a reunion and ceremony in October 2014 in San Antonio.

“We really want to continue to share these brave Latinas’ incredible stories that breast cancer isn’t a death sentence,” Ramirez said. “Surviving is possible with awareness, screening, and early detection.”
Research is proving that, if we eat the right food, it can help fight cancer.

But, what foods fight cancer? What foods don’t? Are there such things as healthy — and tasty — traditional Latino meals and snacks?

Check out my new blog post for Susan G. Komen for the Cure that tackles the issue.

Here’s an excerpt:

“Susan G. Komen has invested more than $20 million into research that is addressing these questions and others about the relationship between diet and exercise and breast cancer prevention. Whether it’s research into phytoestrogens (plant estrogens present in soy and some herbs) or the benefits of a diet rich in fish oil, Komen’s research investment in this area spans diet, exercise and obesity.

My own research in the San Antonio area has focused on diet as well. With funding from Komen, my team and I recently launched a new study to teach breast cancer survivors how certain foods may reduce the risk of breast cancer recurrence as well as the risk of developing other cancers.

Our study, Rx for Better Breast Health, will randomly assign breast cancer survivors to one of two groups. Each study group will get different cancer nutrition tools, possibly including cooking demonstrations by Chef Iverson Brownell, who specializes in creating healthy, tasty culinary recipes.”

Read the full post here and learn more about the Rx study here.

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez
Director, IHPR

Mentee Profiles:
Mentees Promote Healthier Lifestyles in San Antonio

Amanda Merck and Ana Nino know the benefits of eating right and exercising.

That’s why the two students got on-the-ground experience studying and promoting healthy lifestyles through mentoring at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Nino, who is applying to medical school, worked with IHPR researcher Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina to study Latinas’ physical activity and diets in South Texas.

Merck, a fitness instructor and master’s degree student in public health, collected and analyzed data from the San Antonio’s play-in-the-street event, Síclovía. “I completed my undergraduate degree online…and felt like I missed out on opportunities to gain practical experience,” Merck said. “My time at the IHPR connected me to physical activity and health promotion efforts I might otherwise have missed.”

Mentoring at the IHPR proved very valuable, Merck and Nino said.

Nino, for example, who came to IHPR as a mentee through the Student Mentorship Program for Hispanic Health Research program, was just hired by the IHPR for one year—thanks to a new federal diversity grant—to gain more research experience before starting medical school.

She will continue to work with Parra-Medina and her Enlace project.

“She will use Enlace data to examine the impact of acculturation and socioeconomic status on Latinas’ dietary quality and adoption of healthier foods,” Parra-Medina said.

Merck, who came to the IHPR as a mentee through the Mesa Scholars program, helped the IHPR conduct surveys, manage and analyze data, and train volunteers.

She also organized a town hall on healthy living for the San Antonio Mayor’s Fitness Council and its Active Living Council.

Merck also is an instructor for the city’s Fitness in the Park program, where she leads circuit training and yoga at Hardberger Park on Saturdays. She incorporates small nutritional challenges, like eating spinach daily for a week, into her instruction. Check out her work in the Spring 2014 edition of PeakLife Wellness magazine.

“Ahad the great opportunity to participate in multiple aspects of health promotion and evaluation,” Merck said.

Both Merck and Nino have bright futures in health promotion.

“My IHPR experience introduced me to health promotion efforts and key people involved in health promotion in San Antonio, which will help me in my future endeavors to improve physical activity in San Antonio,” Merck said.
Several Latino researchers were among those awarded $7.6 million to prevent cancer this week at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, thanks to the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas.

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the Health Science Center, was awarded a $1.4 million grant. Ramirez will develop bilingual, culturally appropriate social and mobile messages and channels to recruit young adult Latino smokers to sign up for a text-message-based tobacco cessation service.

“Smoking is a problem among young adult Latinos in South Texas, but there are no culturally relevant programs that utilize Latinos’ heavy usage of social media and texting to help them quit,” Ramirez said. “If our project goes as planned, it will increase young adult Latino’s use of tobacco cessation services, and provide a model service that can be cost-effectively replicated across Texas.”

Two other IHPR researchers, Dr. Daisy Morales-Campos and Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, received a $150,000 grant. Their project will increase HPV immunization rates using public education and clinic in-reach strategies among young Hispanic males and females in Hidalgo County clinics.

“This program has the potential to reduce cervical cancer incidence and mortality among Hispanic women in Texas’ Lower Rio Grande Valley,” Morales-Campos said.

Also, Dr. Ricardo Aguiar, associate professor of medicine and biochemistry at the Health Science Center, got a $854,740 grant focused on “Inactivating Mutation of D2HGDH Establishes a Novel Link Between Metabolism, Alpha-KG Dependent Dioxygenases and Epigenetic Reprogramming in B Cell Lymphoma.”

Check out a San Antonio Business Journal report on the new grants.

A new grant will enable the IHPR to develop a text-message-based tobacco cessation service for young adults.

IHPR Research Materials

Publications


Presentations


How to Fight Health Disparities in Your Area (& Get a Scholarship for It!)

A regional health disparities research program has unveiled a new website, membership opportunity, and scholarships under the direction of Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Dr. Ramirez’ program is called GMaP Region 4.

It is one of six regional GMaPs (or Transdisciplinary Geographic Management Programs) funded by the National Cancer Institute to bring together local networks of investigators to collaboratively identify and address health disparities in regions across the country.

GMaP Region 4 is enhancing local communication, recruitment, and evaluation capacity to support health disparities research, training and outreach in Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Wyoming, Utah and Nebraska.

Join the program to learn more and get involved. Apply for these new scholarship opportunities:

- **Early Career Cancer Health Disparities Researcher Scholarship Award**: This award supports career development in cancer health disparities research by paying for conference (i.e., registration, travel, lodging, etc.), workshop, journal/publication fees, and other expenses (deadline: Dec. 1, 2014).

- **Specific Aims Grant Review Program**: This award enables early-career scholars, who are preparing a research grant application, to get valuable feedback from senior researchers (deadline: July 1, 2015).

“GMaP Region 4 is working hard to target our regional health disparities and increase the pipeline of researchers who are tackling those very disparities,” Ramirez said.

GMaP Region 4 was established in 2009 by the National Cancer Institute through Dr. Ramirez’ Latino cancer research program, Redes En Acción. So far, Region 4 has established four subcommittees, identified regional theme areas for future research, and developed an implementation plan to chart the future course of research, training and infrastructure development in the region.

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**IHPR News Briefs**

**Latina Researcher Wins Awards for Service, Research**

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, recently received two awards for her accomplishments in community service and research. She was given the first-ever Making a Different World Award from Latinas Contra Cancer for her dedication to improving health outcomes around Latino cancer. She also was given the Regional Mujer Award from the National Hispana Leadership Institute for serving her community with “justice, love, and the deepest pride in their culture.”

**Latina Researcher Named to National Minority Health Committee**

Dr. Cynthia Mojica, a researcher at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, is among five new appointees to the Advisory Committee on Minority Health for the Office of Minority Health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The 10-member committee advises the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health on improving the health of racial and ethnic minority populations. Mojica, who will serve on the committee through 2018, has extensive experience conducting research in cancer prevention and control. She has made strides to increase cancer screening and diagnostic follow-up, as well as obesity prevention, with an emphasis on community and clinic-based intervention development among ethnic minority and underserved populations.
**Éxito! Program Helps Latinos Seek Doctoral Degrees, Research Careers**

**Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training** is the Institute for Health Promotion Research’s program that encourages Latino master’s-level students or health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a career studying how cancer affects Latinos differently. The program offers a five-day summer institute and internships. Read more [here](#).

**Benjamin Aceves**
Bloomington, Calif.

Growing up in the mainly low-income, Latino areas of Baja, Calif., and Coahuila, Mexico, Benjamin Aceves developed a compassion for his community.

He decided he wanted to help people get healthier.

So, not only did Aceves become his family’s first-ever college graduate with a degree in political science and German, he also earned a master’s degree in health promotion and behavioral science and a master’s degree in Latino America Studies from San Diego State University.

He now works across Southern California to increase awareness in nutrition and physical activity among Latino communities.

To explore how to take his work and educational career to a new level, Aceves found and decided to apply for the **Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training** program, which offers a five-day summer institute and internships to encourage master’s-level students and health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a cancer research career.

Aceves said he learned a lot about cancer and doctoral programs at the **Éxito! Summer Institute**, and it has given him “the confidence to succeed.”

**Brianda Alcazar**
Bellflower, Calif.

Brianda Alcazar, a California native who attended kindergarten in Sonora, Mexico, grew up with an immigrant-life experience of dual cultures, languages, and traditions.

Alcazar is using this experience to identify with and help Latino immigrants.

With a passion for social work that capitalizes on her strong motivation and empathy for other people, Alcazar earned a bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work from California State University, Long Beach. Her area of concentration is Latino youth and mental health.

To find more ways to embody her favorite Gandhi quote (“You must be the change you wish to see in the world”), Alcazar applied for the **Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training** program, which offers a five-day summer institute and internships to encourage master’s-level students and health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a cancer research career.

She relished her time in the program.

“[Éxito!] has definitely motivated me and instilled self-confidence in me,” Alcazar said. “More importantly, Éxito! has empowered me that despite my minority status, I can attain a PhD.”
How to Solve San Antonio’s Low Park Access Score

San Antonio ranks low when it comes to park access, acreage, service, and investment, according to the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the San Antonio Express-News reports.

In fact, San Antonio ranked No. 53 of the 60 largest cities in the nation.

The city’s biggest issue is not park acreage (it has 24,622 of parkland), but access to parks, said Peter Harnik, director of the Center for City Park Excellence.

“For San Antonio, about 35 percent can walk within a half-mile to a park,” Harnik told the Express-News.

Because San Antonio is predominantly Latino and Latino kids often lack safe active spaces, kids in the city can benefit greatly from having easy access to parks.

Policies like shared use agreements between the city and community partners like local school districts, churches, and local organizations, can really make a difference in providing easier access to physical activity and recreational opportunities.

To learn more, check out the “active spaces” policy changes and resources at the Salud America! Growing Healthy Change website.

Go to the map and enter your address to see changes near you.

The website is under the direction of Dr. Amelie Ramirez at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.
Three-Time Cancer Survivor Brings Message of Hope, Prevention to Latinos

Alma Daneshi cried as she sat in her San Diego-area oncologist’s office, traumatized by past-and-present health battles that continued to endanger her life.

She had been through a brain aneurism and open-brain surgery.

Then breast cancer.

Then breast cancer again, followed by cervical cancer.

She had lost her job managing a TGI Fridays restaurant while recovering from the aneurism and taking time off for cancer treatment. She got evicted and worried how she would care for herself and her then 12-year-old daughter.

Then she learned she contracted viral meningitis during treatment.

Daneshi, sitting beside her oncologist, broke down and wept.

But then she got some life-changing advice.

“My oncologist let me cry for a bit before she said, ‘Instead of crying, put your anger and sadness into something positive,’” Daneshi said. “She was on the board of directors for the American Cancer Society (ACS), and she told me I can get involved as a volunteer.”

Daneshi, now cancer-free four years later, is a volunteer extraordinaire.

For ACS’s San Diego region, she speaks at health fairs, answers a cancer hotline, helps organize cancer awareness fundraisers, hosts a cancer support group for Spanish speakers, and counsels Latinos on health insurance.

Daneshi is also involved with the cancer awareness activities of Redes En Acción: The National Latino Cancer Research Network, which is funded by the National Cancer Institute. Redes has four offices — one in San Diego — and a headquarters at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

She just won an ACS “spirit” award for her work with local Hispanics.

“I tell people help is available and prevention is possible,” Daneshi said. “It saves lives if people get preventive health exams.”

For more on Daneshi, read her full story or a detailed Q&A.

Alma Daneshi

Latino News Tweets

Follow the IHPR’s Twitter feed, @SaludToday for all the latest news in Latino health, like:

Cancer
► Genetic Variant May Shield Latinas from Breast Cancer
► Testicular Cancer Rates Are on the Rise in Young Hispanic American
► Study: U.S. Immigration Increases Smoking in Latinos
► Top 6 Preventable Causes of Cancer Death

Other Conditions
► Dangerous Use of HGH Surges among U.S. Teens, Especially Hispanics
► An Inside Look at Chronic Disease and Health Care among U.S. Hispanics
► Peer Mentors Help Latino Kids Deal with Asthma
For the first time ever, U.S. public schools are projected this fall to have more minority students than white students enrolled, a shift largely fueled by growth in the number of Hispanic children, the Associated Press reports.

White students are still most populous, but their numbers dipped just below 50% for the first time.

Here is the racial/ethnic breakdown of students, according to National Center for Education Statistics:
- 49.8% White
- 25% Hispanic
- 15% Black
- 5% Asian
- 5% Other

“The shift creates new academic realities, such as the need for more English language instruction, and cultural ones, meaning changes in school lunch menus in the Southwest and elsewhere to include tortillas and other offerings to reflect students’ tastes,” according to the Associated Press report. But it also brings some complex societal questions that often fall to school systems to address, including issues of immigration, poverty, diversity and inequity.”
Spanish Campaign: Tackling COPD among Latinos

The rising U.S. Latino population makes it important to educate Latinos about the nation’s third-leading cause of death—chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

That’s why the American College of Chest Physicians (CHEST), in collaboration with Sunovion Pharmaceuticals Inc., launched **Tome Un Respiro**, the first Spanish-language campaign to raise awareness among Latinos about COPD prevalence, treatment, and disease management, according to a news release.

The **Tome Un Respiro** website offers Spanish-language resources and tools related to disease management, as well as information on causes, treatments and access to caregiver resources.

How to Tackle Mental Health Issues in Spanish-Speaking Communities

More than 16% of Hispanic adults experienced a mental illness during the previous year, and communities of color are more likely to lack access to care to meet their behavioral health needs, according to federal data.

That’s why the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Minority Health offer new Spanish-language resources.

This includes the [MentalHealth.gov en Español](https://www.mentalhealth.gov/en/Espanol) website with resources and information about prevention, treatment, and recovery from mental health conditions, and the [Toolkit for Community Conversations About Mental Health](https://www.health.gov/mentalhealth/toolkit) to help communities start vital conversations about mental health.

As Skin Cancer Surges among Hispanics, New Spanish-Language Resources Arise

Studies show a 20% increase in skin cancer rates in Hispanics, many of who are misinformed about their risk and believe they are immune to the damaging effects of sun rays, the *Latin Times* reports.

The Skin Cancer Foundation has launched a new public education campaign to inform Hispanics about sun protection.

The campaign includes a Spanish-language website with various resources, information, and potentially life-saving tips to prevent skin cancer (melanoma), advise on warning signs, and promote early detection. The campaign also is bringing Spanish-language printed and other materials to Hispanic-serving clinics, community groups, and media.

Latino Resource Briefs

**Funding**

**Grant Roundup**

The following organizations listed at right have open research funding opportunities or lists:

- The U.S. Office of Minority Health
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure
- AACR
- NIH Obesity Grants
- NCCOR Obesity Grants
- RWJF
- CPRIT

**Ongoing Events**

**CancerCare Workshops**

CancerCare, in partnership with Redes En Acción, which is led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, will offer free workshops on a variety of issues. Register [here](#).
Video Roundup – Click on the images below to view the video for each.

Report: Hispanics Make Up 21% of New HIV/AIDS Infections

Hispanics comprised 21% of new HIV/AIDS infections each year in the United States.

About 1 in 36 Hispanic men and 1 in 106 Hispanic women will be diagnosed with HIV at some point, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Latin Post reports.

That’s why the CDC launched a new Spanish-language campaign, Podemos Detener el VIH Una Conversación a la Vez (We Can Stop HIV One Conversation at a Time).

The campaign aims to provide knowledge and promote talking about HIV prevention to “increase HIV awareness, decrease stigma and shame that are too often associated with HIV, and play a part in stopping HIV in the Hispanic/Latino community.”

CDC offers great educational resources and materials.

It also has a four-part, telenovela-style video series called “Sin Vergüenza” about how a fictional Hispanic family deals with HIV/AIDS (produced by AltaMed).

The campaign also is available for Hispanics in English.

About the E-newsletter

This E-newsletter is produced quarterly by the Institute for Health Promotion Research. Please send news items or story ideas to IHPR@uthscsa.edu.

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The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) is part of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the School of Medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. The IHPR is supported in part by the Health Science Center and its Cancer Therapy & Research Center and Regional Academic Health Center. The IHPR investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and other chronic diseases among the populations of South Texas, Texas, and the nation.