Latinas are less physically active than Latino men and are less likely to meet physical activity guidelines than other population groups.

This inactivity may lead to obesity and associated conditions like heart disease.

To improve Latinas’ health, a new five-year, $3.48 million study will use promotoras — trained community health workers — to lead culturally appropriate group education and exercise sessions for Latinas in community centers in South Texas’ Lower Rio Grande Valley, says study leader Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, professor at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

Participants also will get newsletters and telephone counseling.

The effort, called Enlace (which means to “connect” or “join” in English) and funded by the National Institutes of Health, aims to increase Latinas’ physical activity rates.

“The idea behind Enlace is that, through this promotora intervention, Latinas will gain an otherwise unavailable layer of social support to overcome barriers to activity and make positive behavioral changes — namely that Latinas engage in 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity on five or more days a week,” Dr. Parra-Medina said.

Dr. Parra-Medina and her colleagues have worked with community groups to identify factors that influence Latinas’ physical activity behaviors.

They identified several barriers: the dominance of work and family responsibilities, time, social isolation, lack of social support and personal motivation, access issues (e.g., program costs, lack of childcare and transportation), neighborhood safety, among others.

The team then developed an Enlace intervention using promotoras to work with Latinas to remove those very barriers and enable increased physical activity.

Continued on Page 6
Check out the revamped website of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio!

The website now features more of our recent news, videos, our research projects, educational materials and much more.

Our goal is to continue raising awareness of our work to improve Latino health.

The IHPR was founded in 2006 at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, investigates causes and solutions to cancer and chronic disease disparities to improve Latino health in San Antonio, South Texas and the nation.

We’ve been dedicated to improving Latino health ever since: conducting research, interventions and outreach projects; training scientists and mentor students; and communicating findings and tools with researchers, academics and the public using, social media, news media, public service announcements, newsletters, educational publications, scientific articles and reports, and more.

Our new website is another way of reaching the public with vital health information and for reaching researchers, academics and policymakers who might partner with us.

Please visit the site and let us know what you think at ihpr@uthscsa.edu.

Also, please also join our new e-mailing list.

Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez
Director, IHPR

IHPR Staff Profile:
Alex Head-Zottarelli

Alex Head-Zottarelli’s first interest in science came at age 12 at a biology camp at Texas State University. He collected snails and worms from a riverbed and examined water samples under a microscope — “I was amazed how much life existed there,” he recalled.

However, biology didn’t become his career aim right away.

In college, he started out as an economics major at Louisiana Tech University. He later switched to special education, and switched schools back to Texas State.

A genetics class re-sparked Head-Zottarelli’s childhood interest in science. He ended up earning a bachelor’s degree in biology at Texas State and a master’s degree in public health epidemiology from The UT School of Public Health.

“Public health is a perfect combination of my interest in biological processes, from physiology to ecology, and social and structural determinants,” he said.

Today, Head-Zottarelli is a research area specialist at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR), where he helps identify and use available databases, prepare reports, and conduct geographic and statistical analysis.

Before that, as a graduate research assistant, he helped forge a national network for farmworker research by creating a clinical research database.

He also assisted other projects, including examining mortality inequalities in Bexar County and studying the risk factors for hypertension, obesity, diabetes and back pain in high-school students along the Texas/Mexico border.

Head-Zottarelli said his work at the IHPR maintains his focus on public health.

“My favorite part of the health work is being able to use statistics and geographic information systems (GIS) to address population health in unique ways,” he said.
Latinas Interested in Genetic Testing for Breast Cancer Risk; Barriers Persist

Latinas tend to have positive attitudes and strong interest in genetic testing for breast cancer risk, yet lacked general knowledge about testing, its risks and benefits, according to a new study led by researchers at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

The study, published recently in the journal *Community Medicine & Health Education*, conducted focus groups with 58 Latinas in Hidalgo County, a largely Latino part of South Texas.

Researchers used analyzed focus group responses and uncovered several cultural factors, such as religious beliefs, that impacted Latinas’ decisions to get genetic testing.

“Key Latino values — religiosity, importance of family and the influential role of health care providers in health decisions — should be considered when designing strategies to deliver culturally adapted risk information to increase and ensure Latinas’ understanding of breast cancer genetic testing during their decision-making processes,” said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, the study’s corresponding author and director of the IHPR.

Genetic testing for breast cancer risk may facilitate better-informed decisions regarding cancer prevention, risk reduction, early detection, etc. However, among women who are tested, less than 4% are Latina.

Finding reasons for Latinas’ low participation was the goal of Dr. Ramirez and her team, which included IHPR researchers Dr. Patricia Chalela and Edgar Muñoz.

The researchers found that none of the focus group participants had ever had a genetic test, and most didn’t know what the test was or how it is done.

Most women, after learning what a genetic test was, indicated they would get a test in the next six months if it were available — at no or low cost — to be able to prevent cancer through healthy lifestyle changes or act as soon as possible to treat disease.

But among lesser-educated women, cultural beliefs may hinder their use of testing.

For example, some Latina participants viewed God as the only one who can cure cancer, which might impact their preventive health behaviors. And given Latinos’ tendency to trust the advice of health care providers, some Latinas who lacked health insurance or access to a regular doctor may have fewer opportunities to learn about genetic testing.

“Further research is needed to identify effective ways to communicate genetic risk information to Latinas to help them make informed testing decisions,” Ramirez said.
Video: IHPR Project Touts Cancer Screening for Latinos

Screening can catch cancer at early, more treatable stages.

That’s why Salud San Antonio!, led by IHPR researcher Dr. Cynthia Mojica, is employing several community health workers — also known as promotoras — to teach Latinos in low-income, health-problematic areas on the city’s West and South sides about breast, cervical and colorectal cancer and the benefits of cancer screening.

After promotoras teach, they refer Latinos for cancer screening and even help with travel to appointments, interpreting medical forms and more.

Univision has featured the project. The project is based on a pilot study by the same name (Salud San Antonio!), which found that many Latinas don’t know when to start their screening, and many haven’t been screened. Most eligible Latinas in the pilot study have been screened for either breast, cervical, or colorectal cancer, or are being followed-up by promotoras.

Now promotoras will educate 4,000 Latino men and women a year, reduce barriers to screening services, and improve screening numbers by 1,200 screenings at CentroMed, a federally qualified health center.

IHPR Celebrates New ‘Y Living Center’ in San Antonio

On June 27, 2012, the IHPR’s Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina participated in the grand opening ceremony for the YMCA of Greater San Antonio’s new Y Living Center, a facility designed to aid community wellness with programs focused on balancing the mind, spirit and body. The center is located at 835 Southcross Blvd.
Èxito! Program Helps Latinos Seek Doctoral Degrees, Research Careers

Èxito! 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. Read more here and apply between Oct. 1, 2012, and March 1, 2013.

Elie Benavidez, a master’s-degree student at The University of Texas at San Antonio, already is making strides to improve the lives of Latinos. She teaches elementary-school students and volunteers her time to increase local access to healthy food.

Now Benavidez, inspired by her mother’s cancer battle, is considering seeking a doctoral degree and doing cancer research.

That’s why she and 19 other master’s-level students or health professionals joined the Institute for Health Promotion Research’s second-annual Summer Institute of Èxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training on June 7-11, 2012, in San Antonio.

Èxito! encourages participants to pursue a doctoral degree and careers studying how cancer affects Latinos differently.

“Èxito! has given me so much more confidence than what I thought I had in myself, just by hearing everybody’s stories and the path that they took to get where they are now. I feel like I have what it takes,” Benavidez said. “I feel like I can do anything I put my mind to.”

Èxito! (English: Success!), led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and funded by the National Cancer Institute, annually recruits master’s students and health professionals to build the field of those working to reduce Latino cancer health disparities.

Participants attend a five-day Èxito! summer institute that enhances understanding of: the power of research to affect change; research methods, theory and interventions; cancer control; and networking and skills to successfully apply to a doctoral program.

Participants also are eligible to apply for paid internships.

“The hope is that participants go on to earn doctoral degrees and conduct novel research on why Latinos suffer worse outcomes from cancer and chronic disease,” said Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of Èxito! and the IHPR.

At the first Èxito! Summer Institute in 2011 and the second one in June 2012, a total of 37 participants heard from Latino role models and researchers, such as Dr. Cristina Barroso of Arizona State University and Jose Pagan of the University of North Texas Health Science Center. Participants also learned about cancer, research, culture and career options.

Several Èxito! participants already have been accepted into doctoral programs:

- Maria Brietzke – PhD in Health Behavior and Health Education, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill (2011 Èxito! alumni)
- Roger Figueroa – Illinois Transdisciplinary Obesity Prevention PhD/MPH Program, University of Illinois (2012 Èxito! alumni)
- Marivelisse Soto-Salgado – DrPH in Social Determinants of Health, University of Puerto Rico School of Public Health (2011 Èxito! alumni)
- Mary Vanellys Diaz-Santana – PhD in Epidemiology, University of Massachusetts Amherst (2011 Èxito! alumni)
- Lizette Rangel – DrPH in Health Promotion and Behavioral Sciences, University of Texas School of Public Health, Houston (2012 Èxito! alumni)
- Laura Rubalcava – PhD in Clinical Psychology, George Washington University, DC (2011 Èxito! alumni)
- Donaji Stelzig – DrPH in Health Promotion and Community Health Sciences, Texas A&M Health Science Center, School of Rural Public Health (2011 Èxito! alumni)

“Being in the Èxito! program, I’ve been able to see a lot of Latino role models, and how they’ve undergone a lot of hardship, and they’ve been able to do it in spite of that,” Rangel said. “Being in this program, meeting these professionals, these Latinos, and also being able to meet other students that are in the situation, they have hardships, I felt like, sí se puede. Yes we can.”
How Does Texas’ Health Match Up to Other States?

Here’s an interesting look at Texas’ health ranking compared to other states. For over 20 years, America’s Health Rankings has been tracking the state of our nation’s health by studying numerous health measures to compile a comprehensive perspective on our nation’s health issues, state by state. You can search the rankings and find out how you can take action and become an advocate for improving our nation’s health.

IHPR Study Uses Promotoras to Increase Physical Activity among Latinas

They tested Enlace on a small scale last year in South Texas and also in South Carolina.

In that test, the women in the Enlace intervention actually increased their physical activity by 56.4%, compared to 48.8% among control-group women.

For the new Enlace study, Dr. Parra-Medina’s team will recruit 704 Latinas ages 18-64 who do not meet federal physical activity guidelines from eight community resource centers in colonias — impoverished, underserved Latino settlements in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Half the women will be randomly assigned to the Enlace intervention, which includes:

- 16 once-a-week promotora-led group sessions on home safety, first aid and emergency preparedness; and
- monthly home visits and generic health education materials during the maintenance intervention period.

Dr. Parra-Medina’s team will compare the two groups based on minutes per week of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, physical fitness, weight maintenance and related factors, such as environmental barriers, social support and self-efficacy.

“We hypothesize that Latinas in the intervention group will significantly increase their levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, compared to those in the control group,” Dr. Parra-Medina said.

Study co-investigators include: Dr. Daniel Carlos Hughes, assistant professor at the IHPR; Dr. Joel Michalek, professor and vice chairman of epidemiology and biostatistics at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio; Dr. Daisy Morales-Campos, post-doctoral fellow at the IHPR; and Dr. Jennifer Salinas, assistant professor of epidemiology and biostatistics in the University of Texas School of Public Health’s Brownsville Regional Campus.

This study also is collaborating with the Texas A&M University Colonias Program, including Laura Treviño, regional director of the program in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.
Poll: Hispanics Cite Obesity as Top Health Problem for Kids

U.S. adults rate “not enough exercise” at the top of the list of top health problems for children in their communities, according to the sixth annual survey of top health concerns conducted by the University of Michigan C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital National Poll on Children’s Health.

Other top overall health concerns include childhood obesity, smoking and drug abuse.

Hispanic adults were more likely to rate childhood obesity first, followed by “not enough exercise.”

Hispanics also rated drug abuse higher than smoking and tobacco use.

Hispanic and black adults both identified sexually transmitted infections as a greater concern for kids in their communities than did white adults.

Despite these differences, Hispanic, black and white adults agreed that “not enough exercise” and obesity are two of the top three most pressing health concerns for kids in their communities. Other concerns that made the top 10 in all three groups included drug abuse, smoking and tobacco use, bullying, and teen pregnancy.

Watch a video about the report in English or Spanish.
Bilingual Fotonovela Teaches Latinas How to Reduce Their Diabetes Risk

The National Diabetes Education Program’s new bilingual fotonovela, Do it for them! But also for yourself (Hazlo por ellos! Pero por ti también), helps Latinas at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

The fotonovela uses role models to demonstrate how women can reduce their risk of developing type 2 diabetes through increased physical activity, healthy food choices, and weight loss.

The fotonovela tells the story of three friends, Elisa, Raquel, and Lourdes, who work at a local dry cleaners/laundry facility. All of them have children.

Elisa is Mexican, married, and has two small children. Her wise and humorous mother, Doña Emma, gives her lots of advice about how to be healthy. Raquel is from Puerto Rico. She is single and raising her 13-year-old sister. Lourdes is from Guatemala. She is married, has two children and had gestational diabetes in her last pregnancy.

Read more here.

Latino News Tweets

- Latino Kids Fare Badly in Latest Analysis of Child Data
- Study: Overweight Hispanic Kids More Prone to Gallstones
- Low-Income Latina Moms Send Mixed Messages on Food & Feeding Practices
- Metabolic Syndrome Spurs CVD Risk in Hispanic Women
- Study of Latinas: Viewing Images of High-Calorie Foods Brings on Cravings
- Immunization: U.S. Hispanics Skipping Life-Saving Vaccines
- Overcrowded ERs Are Especially Dangerous for Hispanics
- Study: Elder Abuse in Low-Income Latino Communities Goes Largely Unreported
- New Roadmap Suggests Routes for Reducing Health Care Disparities

Demographics

- Hispanics by the Numbers: Population, State, Family, Business & More
- Infographic: The Growing U.S. Latino Population
- Hispanic Origin Profiles
- Hispanic Students Are Largest Minority Group in College & Elementary
- Percentage of U.S. Kids by Race/Hispanic Origin Today & in 2050
Latino Leadership Group Issues ‘National Latino Policy Agenda’

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 31 of the leading Latino civic organizations in the U.S., has released its agenda of national policy and legislative priorities on Latino issues.

The document, which will be presented to presidential candidates and delegates at the national Democratic and Republican Conventions, covers education, civil rights, immigration, economic security and improvement, health, and government accountability to give candidates an understanding of policies needed to advance the social and economic status of the Latino community in 2012 and beyond.

In the health realm, the document states: “To reverse the disparity between the health status of Latinos and the population at large, public policy must focus on expanding health insurance to the 30 percent of Latinos without coverage, investing in prevention, and improving the cultural and linguistic competence of our health care professionals.”

Read the full agenda here.

Latino Resource Tweets

Funding
Grant Roundup
The following organizations 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
Seminars in Translational Research
Seminars in Translational Research (STRech) unite investigators from The UT Health Science Center and UTSA in basic, clinical and social sciences to highlight the stages of the scientific translation of research discoveries.

Continuing Education Audio Conferences
The Teleconference Network of Texas at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio has developed audio conferences on topics like blood banking, microbiology, nutrition updates, health education and training, social work and more. Register by calling 1-800-982-8868.

CancerCare Workshops
CancerCare, in partnership with Redes En Acción, which is led by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHP) 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.

Latina Girl with Cancer Inspires World on YouTube

Latino Teen’s Weight-Loss Story

Latina Family Makes Lifestyle Changes: Alejandra

Latino Family Makes Lifestyle Changes: Maya

Jesus Lopez: Steps Up, Scales Down

Jorge Hernandez: Lifestyle Changes

How Often Youth Drink Soda

Why Is P.E. Important? (Spanish)

Excess Weight Associated with Increased Cancer Risk

How You Spend Your Free Time Can Lower Risk for Heart Disease

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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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