Liver cancer rates among South Texas Latinos are higher than in other U.S. Latinos, as are their rates of obesity and diabetes—and the relationships between these ailments are being mapped by researchers led by Dr. Amelie Ramirez, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

In a new study published in the journal *PLoS ONE*, the researchers looked at overall liver cancer rates among U.S. Latinos and compared this to a Texas sample and a South Texas subset from 1995-2006.

They also compared prevalence among Latinos of lifestyle-associated factors that contribute to liver cancer: alcohol use, smoking, obesity and diabetes.

They found that from 1995 to 2006, liver cancer incidence increased among all populations, but was highest in South Texas Latinos over the entire period. The increase among South Texas Latinos was also significantly greater than all Texas Latinos, who in turn had significantly higher levels of liver cancer than the U.S. national sample.

While obesity and diabetes increased among all three groups, obesity rates were higher in Texas Latinos and highest in South Texas Latinos.

Neither heavy alcohol consumption nor cigarette smoking increased.

"Regarding risk factors, we found remarkably similar and significantly increasing rates of obesity and diabetes in our study groups, with higher..."
**Director’s Corner**

**From IHPR Director**
**Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez**

A new National Institutes of Health (NIH) website, [NIH Clinical Research Trials and You](https://www.clinicaltrials.gov), helps people learn about clinical trials and how they can participate.

The resource, offered in English and Spanish, answers basic questions such as:
- What are clinical trials and why do people participate?
- Who participates in clinical trials?
- What do I need to know if I am thinking about participating?

The website also offers volunteer stories, researcher stories and educational resources. You can also get help finding a clinical trial.

Meanwhile, the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) continues to develop culturally relevant strategies for clinical trial accrual among Latinos.

Our new trial, funded by Susan G. Komen for the Cure and uniting several UT Health Science Center researchers (Anand Karnad, Peter Ravdin and the IHPR’s Patricia Chalela), is randomizing 112 Latina breast cancer patients to a control group or an interactive communications intervention—using a culturally relevant computer video, a tailored brochure and a community health worker.

We hypothesize that the intervention will boost Latinas’ self-efficacy and informed decision-making to enter breast cancer clinical trials.

And don’t forget to watch our [PSAs](https://www.clinicaltrials.gov) on why Latinos should try clinical trials.

**Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez**
Director, IHPR

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**IHPR Staff Profile: Armida Flores**

Armida Flores was a professional *abuela*—babysitting her granddaughters, volunteering at their schools, etc.—until they moved to California a few years ago.

Flores wasn’t sure what to do with her newfound spare time.

So the Mexico native, who was 30 years removed from school, didn’t know much English and had no career training, decided to enroll in bilingual nursing classes at Palo Alto College in San Antonio and simultaneously earned her GED in Spanish in 2008.

She also took beginner and advanced English to polish her language skills, and in May 2012 earned an associate’s degree in social work, psychology and Spanish.

“The biggest obstacle I had to overcome was to accept that I am not too old to start a new process in my life,” said Flores. “Now that I have overcome this obstacle, I continue working to improve my language and computer skills.”

She’s kick-started her career as a health educator at the IHPR at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio.

She serves as a patient navigator to help cancer survivors navigate the complex health care system, get emotional support, and access needed care services.

She also is a *promotora*—a community health worker for Latinos—on an IHPR-LIVESTRONG partnership to identify Latino cancer patients and refer them to LIVESTRONG’s cancer survivor services.

LIVESTRONG recently lauded Flores for having the highest number of referrals, and invited her to a national conference in July 2012.

Flores also coordinates workshops, member recruitment and record-keeping for the San Antonio Community Health Association, and she co-founded the *Cuenta Conmigo* cancer support group for Spanish speakers.

“Armida is the perfect bridge between our Latino community and our health care providers/system,” said IHPR researcher Sandra San Miguel de Majors. “Latino cancer survivors are able to relate to her because she’s from their own community, she speaks their same language and she understands their culture and barriers.

“I admire her positive attitude and willingness to help everyone.”

Flores hopes to eventually earn bachelor’s and master’s degrees in counseling.

“My motivations to accomplish my goals are my family, myself, and my desire to learn how to be able to help people in my community,” she said.

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**Fun Facts**

**Hometown:** Matehuala San Luis Potosi, Mexico

**Family:** Mother; three sisters; four brothers; five children; four grandchildren

**Hobbies:** Walk in the park; wake up early to listen to and feed birds; read educational books; attend community events

**Favorite food(s):** Nopalitos and tostadas with pico de gallo and guacamole (“everything has to be very spicy”)

**Favorite movie(s):** *March of the Penguins*; Bruce Lee movies

**Favorite book(s):** History and psychology books
South Texas Study Seeks to Motivate Breast Cancer Survivors to Get Fit

Do encouraging, personalized messages, received on a regular basis, inspire women to exercise after they’ve been treated for breast cancer?

To find out, the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio is enrolling Hispanic survivors of breast cancer for a 16-week clinical research exercise study conducted in South Texas’ Lower Rio Grande Valley to address this topic.

Changed thinking that leads to self-confidence leads to changed behavior—that’s the idea behind the study.

The study requires two visits to the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio Regional Academic Health Center campus in Harlingen to answer questionnaires, do a complete physical fitness assessment and develop each woman’s individualized comprehensive exercise program.

Also, each woman receives a personalized newsletter geared just for her.

“The goal is to motivate the Hispanic women to increase their physical activity, as studies have shown this improves quality of life and reduces the risk of developing other cancers and diseases,” said Gabriela Villanueva, research area specialist associate with the IHPR, who is working on the National Cancer Institute-funded study led by the IHPR’s Dr. Daniel Carlos Hughes. “It’s a really good program for our women.”

Hispanic women 18 and older who completed their cancer treatment at least two months prior are invited to inquire about eligibility. Several Hispanic women have joined the study since it began early this year, but researchers are looking for more.

Study participants will be compensated up to $75 in gift cards for participating.

But perhaps the best part is they get a prescription of exercise that they can carry on long after the study has ended.

For more information, contact Villanueva at (956) 365-8699 or villanuevag@uthscsa.edu.

IHPR Publications and Presentations


Presentations

IHPR News Briefs

IHPR Essay Earns ‘Research Ethics’ Award
An essay on research ethics by Rose Annie Trevino, a research area specialist at the IHPR’s satellite office in Harlingen, Texas, won her the annual Dr. Margaret (Sue) Keir Hoppe Award in Research Ethics from the Women’s Faculty Association at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. Trevino was recognized at an awards ceremony May 15, 2012.

IHPR Researcher Joins Recruitment and Retention Committee
Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, who specializes in Latino health disparities research at the IHPR, recently joined the Recruitment and Retention Committee at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio. The committee meets on an ad hoc basis to review faculty recruitments and retention packages and serves in an advisory role to the dean of the School of Medicine at the Health Science Center.

IHPR Teaches Elementary Kids about Cancer Control Careers
IHPR research instructor Sandra San Miguel de Majors promoted careers in cancer control research to 350 third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students May 21, 2012, at Oak Hills Terrace Elementary School in San Antonio, Texas. San Miguel de Majors, alongside IHPR intern Samantha Gonzalez, spoke to students during the school’s “career day” and handed out LIVESTRONG cancer education materials and wristbands. “Including health education and outreach to schools and increasing the pipeline of future researchers and health care providers is a big part of public health work,” said San Miguel de Majors. “I had a wonderful time doing this.”

IHPR Staffers Earn Degrees
Several IHPR staff members recently earned additional degrees or are nearing their degree completion dates, including: Dorothy Long Parma, a master’s in public health (with interest in health promotion and behavioral science) from the UT School of Public Health-San Antonio Campus; Rebecca Adeigbe, a master’s degree in health and kinesiology from UT San Antonio; Sandra Veronica Covarrubias, a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of the Incarnate Word; and Armida Flores, an associate’s degree in psychology, social work and Spanish from Palo Alto College. The IHPR conducted a special lunch in their honor on May 21, 2012.

IHPR News

Case Study: Closing Health Gaps for Latinos with Cancer
LIVESTRONG successfully reached out to Latinos to close a gap in survivorship services for those diagnosed with cancer, a new case study shows.

The case study on its campaign, Navigating the Cancer Experience: Reviewing the Impact of LIVESTRONG’s Navigation Services, indicates that in 2010 more than 25,000 Latinos were served through direct support, print or online resources at LIVESTRONGespanol.org.

Also, the number of Latino survivors accessing LIVESTRONG’s free, confidential navigation services increased by 40 percent.

The campaign also received an honorable mention for Multicultural Marketing Campaign of the Year at the recent PRWeek Awards.

“This public education campaign is helping to bridge the gap in healthcare resources for Hispanic cancer survivors and, equally important, addressing the need for culturally relevant communications to at-risk populations,” said Katherine McLane, LIVESTRONG senior director for communications and external affairs, in a statement. “By publically sharing the study behind our successful campaign, we hope people can use this information to benefit Hispanics affected by cancer.”

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death for U.S. Latinos, accounting for about 20 percent of all deaths, statistics show.

Continued on Page 8

Watch this video that describes LIVESTRONG patient navigation services.

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The IHPR’s recent graduates (left to right): Armida Flores, Sandra V. Covarrubias, Rebecca Adeigbe and Dorothy Long Parma.

Covarrubias, a bachelor’s degree in nursing from the University of the Incarnate Word; and Armida Flores, an associate’s degree in psychology, social work and Spanish from Palo Alto College. The IHPR conducted a special lunch in their honor on May 21, 2012.
Éxito! Program Helps Latinos Seek Doctoral Degrees, Research Careers

Below are inspiring testimonials from two graduates of the 2011 Summer Institute of Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training, the Institute for Health Promotion Research’s program that encourages Latino master’s-level students or health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and careers studying how cancer affects Latinos differently. Read more testimonials here.

Éxito! Grad: Edianys Arlyn Velez
El Paso, Texas

Edianys Arlyn Velez developed a passion for helping others from the constant support of her parents and her childhood experiences with family members diagnosed with cancer.

Her passion particularly applies to women’s health issues.

That’s why Velez currently is a master’s degree student at the University of Texas School of Public Health regional campus in El Paso, Texas, where she also coordinates a study investigating the genetic and environmental determinants of maternal and neonatal adverse pregnancy outcomes in El Paso.

Velez wants to do more.

To explore doctoral degree options and learn more about cancer research, she joined Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training—which aims to increase diversity in Latino health disparities and cancer research by encouraging Latino master’s-level students and master’s trained health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a career in research.

“The program allowed me to realize that I could in fact apply, pursue, and obtain a doctorate degree in public health,” she said. “I was undecided prior to the Éxito! Summer Institute [in June 2011] and unsure as to whether or not I would be able to apply and be accepted into DrPH program, but the institute helped me to realize that such goals were attainable by giving me the tools necessary to find a right fit for me.”

Éxito! Grad: Marina Daldalian
Kansas City, Kan.

Growing up, Marina Daldalian’s mother, the daughter of a migrant worker, and her father, a native of Lebanon, taught her the importance of education and about caring for those with few resources.

As she volunteered locally and abroad for several years, a focus on health became Daldalian’s calling.

In Kansas City, Kan., Daldalian is a master’s of public health degree student at the University of Kansas Medical Center, where she also serves as a research assistant in the JUNTOS center for Advancing Latino Health in the Department of Preventative Medicine.

Marina heard about Éxito! Latino Cancer Research Leadership Training from a mentor, who encouraged her to apply.

She decided to apply to Éxito!—which aims to increase diversity in Latino health disparities and cancer research by encouraging Latino master’s-level students and master’s trained health professionals to pursue a doctoral degree and a career in research—because she felt it was a “unique opportunity to learn more about research, career choices and higher education from the perspectives of successful Latinos.”

“I was very interested in health disparities before attending Éxito!, but the program taught me how important it is that Latinos pursue careers in the field,” Daldalian said. “Éxito! gave me a deep appreciation for the unique point of view and contributions that can only really be made by people who innately understand Latino culture, and now I feel a deep interest and responsibility to pursue a career in health disparities.”
‘Texas Cancer Plan’ Aims to Reduce State’s Cancer Burden

The Texas Cancer Plan, developed by the Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), is a statewide call to action for cancer research, prevention, and control to reduce Texas’ cancer burden and improve the lives of Texans.

The plan — developed with input provided from organizations and institutions, community leaders, planners, coalition members, cancer survivors, and family and friends affected by cancer—identifies the challenges and issues that affect Texas.

It also offers a set of goals, objectives, and strategies to help inform and guide communities in the fight against cancer.

Specifically, it includes:
- 16 specific goals;
- Measureable objectives, baselines, and targets for change;
- Strategic actions for implementation;
- Research and commercialization section; and
- “Call to Action” section – What Can YOU Do?

Download the Texas Cancer Plan and view other resources to use to help promote the plan in your community.

Texas News Tweets

Follow the IHPR’s Twitter feed, @SaludToday for all the latest news in Latino health, like:
- Study: Complete Genomics Sequencing Data May Help Researchers Discover New Diabetes Genetic Variants in Hispanics
- Survey: 1 in 4 Texas Kids Live in Poverty
- Report: South Texas Border-Area Health Clinics Challenged as Poor Increase
- CDC: How San Antonio is Getting Healthier
- Website: Texas’ New Center for Elimination of Disproportionality and Disparities
- Report: In Latino Region of Texas, College Students Close Education Gap for Others

Study: Latino Liver Cancer Linked to Diabetes, Obesity

Continued from Page 1

obesity prevalence in Texas and particularly South Texas Latinos,” said Ramirez, lead author of the study.

The study warrants further exploration if there is a relationship between diabetes, obesity and liver cancer so that researchers can look at the problem from the standpoint of prevention, said Ramirez, who also is a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics in the Health Science Center’s School of Medicine and associate director of health disparities at the Health Science Center’s Cancer Therapy & Research Center.

“Both obesity and diabetes are preventable and/or treatable,” she said, “so reducing obesity and diabetes may be important for lowering Latinos’ risk for liver cancer, too.”

Other study contributors included: the IHPR’s Alan Holden, Edgar Munoz and Nancy Weiss; Susan Naylor of the Health Science Center; Sharon Cooper of the UT School of Public Health; and Lucina Suarez of the Texas Department of State Health Services.
Editor’s Note: This post is part of an ongoing series that will highlight the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s work in Latino communities across the country.

While many schools are trying to find the best ways to combat bullying, one program has shown promising success. Playworks is a national nonprofit that provides coaches to lead healthy recess and other playtime in diverse schools in 23 cities.

During a recent evaluation of the program, researchers found that investing in school recess and organized play can prevent bullying, improve how students act during recess and how ready they are for class, and provide more time for teaching and learning.

“Our research shows that Playworks makes a difference. Teachers in Playworks schools reported less bullying and exclusionary behavior during recess relative to control school teachers,” said Dr. Susanne James-Burdumy, associate director of research at Mathematica. “Playworks also facilitated students’ transitions back to classroom learning.”

In addition, researchers concluded that Playworks improves the school climate through:

• Better Recess Behavior and Readiness for Class: Teachers at Playworks schools tended to report better student behavior at recess and readiness for class than teachers at control schools, and they were more likely to report that their students enjoyed adult-organized recess activities.

• More Time for Teaching and Learning: Teachers in Playworks schools reported having fewer difficulties and spending significantly less time transitioning to learning activities after recess than teachers in control schools. Playworks students were also more likely than control students to report better behavior and attention in class after sports, games and play.

• Safer Schools: Teachers in Playworks schools perceived that students felt safer and more included at recess, compared to teachers in control schools.

• Satisfied Teachers: Nearly 100 percent of teachers in Playworks schools reported that they wanted the program in their school again the following year.

This new research, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, contributes to a growing body of evidence that a safe, healthy recess environment can contribute to better behavior and learning in schools.

“For our education system to succeed, our schools need to be able to create the conditions for learning,” said Jill Vialet, CEO and founder of Playworks. “The good news is that we’ve developed a model that can be replicated almost anywhere and produces positive and measurable results.”
Study: Do Tiendas Offer Healthier Food Options?

Barriers remain in Latinos’ ability to purchase healthier dairy and meat options in tiendas—Latino-focused grocery stores—according to a new study.

The study, published recently in Public Health Nutrition, compared the availability, quality and cost of healthy and unhealthy foods in 10 tiendas and 15 supermarkets in San Diego County, Calif.

Researchers found that tiendas were smaller, charged more for a gallon of skim milk, and offered less lean ground beef than supermarkets.

However, they also found that tiendas had similar fresh produce offerings at lower prices.

“These results highlight the potential that tiendas have in improving access to quality, fresh produce within lower-income communities,” the researchers concluded. “However, efforts are needed to increase the access and affordability of healthy dairy and meat products.”

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

Healthy Lifestyles
- Study: Low-Income Hispanic Mothers May Overfeed Their Infants
- Report: Hispanic Parents Are Vital in Steering Kids from Sedentary Activities
- Study: The Role of Culture in Latina Weight Loss
- Study: High Salt Intake Linked to Higher Stroke Risk in Hispanics, Blacks

Care Issues
- Study: Docs Less Likely To Prescribe Antidepressants to Depressed Latinos, Blacks
- Report: Less Than 1% of Hispanics, Asians and African-Americans Donate Blood

Demographics
- Report: Net Migration from Mexico Has Stopped...Now What?

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Study: Closing Health Gaps for Latinos with Cancer

Continued from Page 4

Research shows that many Latinos fail to recognize symptoms of cancer, which frequently leads to late detection and poorer outcomes.

Factors contributing to the high rate of deaths from cancer among Latinos include: language barriers, cultural beliefs, among others.

To address this alarming trend, LIVESTRONG in November 2010 launched a national public education campaign to generate awareness of its free resources available in English and Spanish for Hispanics/Latinos affected by cancer.

The campaign—aided by the input of Sandra San Miguel de Majors, a research instructor at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, which partnered with LIVESTRONG through its National Cancer Institute-funded Redes En Acción: The National Latino Cancer Research Network—was comprised of various highly targeted outreach initiatives and anchored by a community health worker (or promotora) training program designed to empower cancer survivors by equipping them with the necessary resources.

LIVESTRONG now has a growing network of promotores who work in the community to help spread the word about these services, having trained 500 promotores in 16 states and plans to train 750 more in 2012.

Read the full case study here.
Vital Vaccine Information Now in Spanish

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) recently launched a Spanish version of its vaccine information website, which aims to answer questions, educate about diseases that vaccines prevent, and connect individuals with resources to keep themselves and their families healthy.

The Spanish version of the site includes the following:

- Easy-to-read vaccine recommendation schedules for all age groups and health conditions;
- Clear information about vaccines and the diseases they prevent;
- Tips on travel immunizations and staying healthy abroad;
- Resources regarding vaccine requirements for school or child care entry;
- Info on where to get vaccinated and programs to make immunizations more affordable, including a community clinic locator; and
- Tools to share content via social media

To visit the English version, go here.
To visit the Spanish version, go here.

Thanks to the Border Health Commission for the tip on the new website.

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

- Online Tool: How a Pastor Can Help Latino Families Eat Healthier
- Online Tool: How Healthy is Your County?
- Online Tools: Health Resources in Spanish
- Online Tool: Latina Moms and Moms-to-Be Can Get Free Health Tips by Texting BABY in English or BEBE in Spanish to 511411
- Support Network: A Model to Meet Latinas’ Cancer Needs
- Report: Obesity Fight Must Shift from Personal Blame
- Online Tool: The U.S. Office of Minority Health
- Susan G. Komen for the Cure
- AACR
- NIH Obesity Grants
- NCCOR Obesity Grants
- RWJF
- CPRIT

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 (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.

Videonovela Series on Diabetes Treatments: Part 1
Videonovela Series on Diabetes Treatments: Part 2
Videonovela Series on Diabetes Treatments: Part 3
Culturally Tailored Program Helps Mexican-American Women Lose Weight
‘No Excuses’ for Not Getting Colon Cancer Screening
Novela Teaches Importance of Safe Medication Use
Unique Camp Supports Kids of Adults with Cancer
What Makes a Farmer’s Market Viable in a Low-Income Area?
Latina’s Diabetes Experience: ‘I Choose Life’
Dramatic, Poetry-Infused PSAs Target Minority Diabetes

About the E-newsletter
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