Latina Researcher Takes New Leadership Roles in Health Research

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (Feb. 22, 2016)—Dr. Deborah Parra-Medina, a Latino health researcher and professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, recently became a national research fellow and is co-leading regional health education centers in South Texas.

Parra-Medina was named a Fellow by the American Academy of Health Behavior (AAHB), a national group of researchers who apply study results to improve public health. Fellows are selected for their significant contributions to advancing health behavior knowledge, as well as a strong record of scientific investigations, publications, and presentations.

She will be recognized at the AAHB’s scientific meeting Feb. 21-24, 2016, in Florida.

Parra-Medina also recently became co-director of the South Texas Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Program in the Center for South Texas Programs at the Health Science Center. AHEC aims to improve South Texans’ access to quality, culturally competent healthcare through preparation, composition, and distribution of the health professional workforce.

In these new roles, Parra-Medina brings her vast research experience in Latino cancer, chronic disease, and healthy lifestyles using many approaches, including community partnerships, peer health education, and multimedia strategies, such as text-messaging.

“I’m honored to be a part of organizations that are dedicated to improving the health of Latinos and medically underserved populations in South Texas and beyond,” Parra-Medina said.

Parra-Medina leads several research projects at the IHPR, including: a professional education and community outreach program to increase awareness and uptake of the HPV vaccine in South Texas; Health4Kids program that uses family counseling, texting and newsletters to control weight and encourage healthy habits; and the Enlace study that uses the promotora peer education model to promote physical activity among Latinas in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. She also is a member of the Cancer Prevention and Population Science research program at the Cancer Therapy and Research Center, an NCI-designated cancer center.

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The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease among certain populations, including Latinos, in South Texas and the nation. The IHPR, founded in 2006, uses evidence-guided research, training and community outreach to improve
the health of those at a disadvantage due to race/ethnicity or social determinants. Visit the IHPR at http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu. Follow the IHPR’s Latino health social media campaign, SaludToday.