Local Researcher Wins ‘Making a Different World’ Award

SAN ANTONIO (July 22, 2014) – Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, director of the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, has received the first-ever “Making a Different World” award from Latinas Contra Cancer for her dedication to improving health outcomes around Latino cancer.

Ramirez, an internationally recognized expert in health disparities research, has spent 30 years developing unique health communication models and interventions that have helped reduce cancer rates and increase cancer screening among Latinos.

She also directs the National Cancer Institute-funded Redes En Acción program, a national research network that has made big strides in research, training, and education to reduce Latino cancer.

Redes is a partner of Latinas Contra Cancer, which provides cancer health education and support for low-income Latinos.

Ramirez received the honor at the Latinas Contra Cancer 4th Biennial National Latino Cancer Summit July 20-22, 2014, in San Francisco.

“I am honored by this tremendous distinction from some of the key leaders in our nation’s growing effort to reduce cancer inequalities among Latinos,” said Dr. Ramirez, the Dielmann Chair in Health Disparities Research & Community Outreach and the Max and Minnie Tomerlin Voelcker Endowed Chair in Cancer Health Care Disparities at the Health Science Center. “We are truly working hard to show how Latino communities can reduce their risk for cancer, how to help patients navigate the health care system, and how to help cancer survivors.”

At the conference, Ramirez also led a panel, “Navigators, Promotoras, and CHWs: How Health Care Workers can Help Solve Cancer Health Disparities among Latinos.” The panel identified the use of patient navigators, promotoras, and other community health workers (CHWs) in research interventions and outreach/educational programs to bridge the gap on cancer health disparities and Latinos’ access to health insurance and quality health care.

Recently, Ramirez and her Redes colleagues discovered that Latinas endure a lag in definitive breast cancer diagnosis and treatment initiation, which jeopardizes their outcomes.
So they conducted a randomized controlled trial to test if patient navigation would improve access to healthcare and health system navigation specifically among the Latina population.

“The trial hypothesized, and went on to prove, that navigation can reduce Latinas’ times to diagnosis and treatment and significantly increase the proportion of Latinas initiating treatment,” Ramirez said. “Navigation indeed is likely to have saved the lives of many local Latinas.”

Ramirez also mentors Latino undergrad, pre- and post-doctoral students, contributes to the scientific literature and serves on editorial boards for several journals. She has been recognized for her work to improve Latino health and advance Latinos in medicine, public health, and behavioral sciences across the U.S., including: 2011 White House “Champion of Change”; 2007 election to the Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academies; 2007 Professor of Survivorship from Susan G. Komen For the Cure; and 2003 Humanitarian Award from the American Cancer Society.

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The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, one of the country’s leading health sciences universities, ranks in the top 3 percent of all institutions worldwide receiving federal funding. Research and other sponsored program activity totaled $228 million in fiscal year 2010. The university’s schools of medicine, nursing, dentistry, health professions and graduate biomedical sciences have produced approximately 26,000 graduates. The $744 million operating budget supports eight campuses in San Antonio, Laredo, Harlingen and Edinburg. For more information on the many ways “We make lives better®,” visit www.uthscsa.edu.

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The University of Texas 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 San Antonio, 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, such as education or income. Visit the IHPR online at http://ihpr.uthscsa.edu or follow its blog at http://www.saludtoday.com/blog.