



Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities

Towards Equity in Health



What's New at the IHCD?

Presentations & Speakers

The Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities Service sponsored a series of talks this quarter: Arthur Kleinman, MD, Esther and Sidney Rabb Professor, Department of Anthropology, Harvard University, and Professor of Medical Anthropology in Global Health and Social Medicine and Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School, gave a talk titled **Caregiving and Medicine: Are They Compatible in Our Time?** as part of the Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Grand Rounds; Carla Boutin-Foster, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College, presented **Conducting Health Behavior Interventions in a Community-Based Practice Setting**; and Judith Zelikoff, PhD, Professor, Department of Environmental Medicine, NYU Langone Medical Center, presented **Catechu or Not to Chew: A Peek into the Toxicology of Gutka**.

IHCD members gave the following presentations:

In an online podcast produced by *The New England Journal of Medicine*, IHCD Service Chief Francesca Gany, MD, MS discussed undocumented immigrants and the US healthcare system, **Lost in Translation — ¿Cómo se dice, "Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act"?**. It can be heard at this link: mskvideos/videos/NEJM20120531.asx.

Jennifer Leng, MD, MPH, presented **Immigrant Health** at the NY/NJ Asian Pacific American Medical Student Association Regional Conference at Mount Sinai School of Medicine; Lisa Diamond, MD, MPH, presented the **Food to Overcome Outcomes Project** at Lincoln Hospital Oncology Grand Rounds; and Claudia Ayash, MPH, presented **Immigrant Health and Cancer Disparities** and Dr. Leng, presented **Support and Survivorship Interventions for Chinese Immigrant Cancer Patients** for MSKCC employees as part of Minority Cancer Awareness Week, which was organized by the Office of Diversity Programs in Clinical Cancer Research and Training. Dr. Gany also gave the following presentations this quarter: **Taxi Drivers: Intervening to Improve Their Health** at the Psycho-Oncology Work in Progress Research Series at MSKCC; **Smokeless Tobacco Use: The Intersection between Culture and Biology** at the RCMI Health Disparities Seminar Series, City College of New York, in May; and **Beyond the Paradox: Health for a New Millennium** as a panelist at the Mexican Studies Conference at Lehman College.

Funding Updates

The Olayan Group has provided generous funding for our Arab Health Initiative. Thanks to this support, we are expanding both the AMBER initiative to include more women and an enhanced support component and the Cancer Portal Project to include local and international Arab communities. Additionally, the increased funding will support a Colorectal Cancer Screening Initiative, which includes a research component, Arabic language education workshops, and assistance with screening.

We have received additional funding from the Robin Hood Foundation to support the Program for Medical Interpreting Services and Education (PROMISE) for a second year. With their support, PROMISE will continue to train unemployed and underemployed individuals, including veterans and the disabled, in medical interpreting and job skills, and to assist them in finding jobs.

Staff Updates

We are very happy to welcome the following new staff members: Sahar Farah, Community Outreach Coordinator; Marina Bluvshsteyn, Research Secretary; Patrick Chen, IT Developer; Tatiana Fernandez, Administrative Assistant for Events; Lakshmi Prasad, Community Event Outreach Coordinator; Nicole Roberts, Research Manager; and Rohini Sen, Assistant Research Biostatistician. Pavan Gill, Community Outreach Coordinator, will be leaving IHCD to start medical school at the University of Toronto. We thank Pavan for her hard work over the past two years and wish her well in her new endeavors! A big thank-you to our spring interns: Anna Sadovnikova, student at University of California, Berkeley; Anto Ayinikal, MPH/MSN candidate at Hunter College; Maria Xia, student at Washington University in St. Louis; Mateo Eckstat, Doctorate of Medicine candidate at the Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University; Rachel Meislin, Doctorate of Medicine Candidate at the NYU School of Medicine; Tala El-Yousef, MPH candidate at Columbia University; and Sonia Taneja, student at Yale University.

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Project Updates

Cancer Portal Project

The Cancer Portal Project addresses the social and economic barriers to cancer treatment experienced by underserved cancer patients, and aims to improve health outcomes. We have developed and increased capacity-building to support community-based services for immigrant cancer patients through the delivery of ongoing training. We continue to host quarterly ICCAN meetings to train cancer service providers and engage CBOs, cancer service providers, social workers, and immigrant advocacy organizations to brainstorm effective advocacy measures. Our April meeting was a great success, with more than 30 different agencies present. For more information, please contact Julia Ramirez at ramirej1@mskcc.org.

Food to Overcome Outcomes Disparities (FOOD)

The FOOD program is expanding its hospital-based pantry project to identify and address food insecurity among patients with cancer. Our newest addition to the program is Kings County Hospital Center, in Brooklyn. In addition to pantries operating in Brooklyn and Manhattan, the FOOD program will soon expand to Queens and the Bronx.

In April, cancer patients and caregivers at Lincoln Hospital enjoyed an interactive nutrition workshop conducted by Ina Flores, MS, RD, CDN, a clinical dietitian for in-patient oncology at Mount Sinai Hospital. Workshop participants learned nutritional strategies for managing side effects during and after cancer treatment. For more information about the FOOD program, please contact Josh Wessler at wesslerj@mskcc.org.

Language Core

Our Language Core is thriving. We are helping to equip researchers with the tools to enroll and serve diverse populations in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. Our projects are wide-ranging and cover topics such as genetics, melanoma risk among Latinos, lymphedema and gynecologic cancer, employment in low-proficiency cancer survivors, and the development of interventions for Chinese cancer patient support and survivorship.

The Program for Medical Interpreting Services and Education (PROMISE), funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, trains unemployed or underemployed individuals, including veterans and the disabled, in medical interpreting and job skills, and assists them in finding jobs. During PROMISE's first year, we trained 170 individuals, coached them in job skills, and placed more than 80 percent of them in part- or full-time jobs. We are actively recruiting new participants. Participants must be unemployed, bilingual, and residents of NYC. We are especially interested in veterans. For more information, please contact Javier Gonzalez at gonzalc3@mskcc.org.

HPV Vaccine Practices

The HPV vaccine program conducts studies to improve usage of the HPV vaccine in underserved communities. One study is assessing the extent to which physicians utilize the HPV vaccine among their minority, high-risk patient population. The study is also exploring physicians' knowledge of, attitudes toward, beliefs regarding, and barriers to recommending the HPV vaccine. Another study aims to understand Latino parents' attitudes toward the use of the HPV vaccine for their sons and daughters. For more information, please contact Abraham Aragones at aragonea@mskcc.org.

Ventanilla De Salud (Health Windows)

The Ventanilla de Salud (Health Windows) program was designed by the Mexican Consulate to improve the health of, and strengthen disease prevention activities for, Mexican families living in the United States. IHCD continues to visit the Mexican Consulate in New York City on a weekly basis.

The VDS program provides on-site assistance and outreach to low-income and immigrant families who may be unfamiliar with the US health system. It offers viable strategies to decrease the access barriers among the consular clients and their families. Further, IHCD staff provides a culturally sensitive screening and information center including patient referrals and educational materials. For more information, please contact Julia Ramirez at ramirej1@mskcc.org.

South Asian Health Initiative (SAHI)

SAHI is a multidisciplinary community-academic partnership that focuses on community-engaged research, education, and service to reduce health disparities faced by the South Asian community. In May, we conducted a health fair at a Bengali Street Fair in Jackson Heights, Queens, and provided screenings to 35 participants. In June, we partnered with Adhikaar and the Association of Nepali Physicians in America for a health fair and serviced 85 members of the Nepali community. Thank you to all of the volunteers who joined us for these events! We will continue to follow up with participants and case manage them into the healthcare system.

On the research side, the data collection phase of the focus group study "**Exploring Disengagement Beliefs Related to Gutka Use among South Asian Adults,**" led by Smita Banerjee, PhD, is officially complete and the team is currently analyzing results. We have also completed data analysis for the Supporting Taxi Drivers to Exercise through Pedometers (STEP) and Step On It! programs and are now preparing publications. For more information about SAHI, please contact us at sahi@mskcc.org.

Arab Health Initiatives

The Arab Health Initiative focuses on education and services to reduce health disparities experienced by local and international Arab communities.

We are hosting the Arabic-language *AMBER (Arab American Breast Cancer Education and Referral)* support and education program for breast cancer patients, facilitated by Dr. Souha Nikowitz. The group, which meets on a monthly basis, provides women diagnosed with breast cancer with an opportunity to share experiences and discuss various education topics. We also had a robust spring workshop and health fair schedule with events in Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island. Additionally, we are working with our partner hospitals and the Cancer Services Program to help women obtain screening mammograms.

We just launched an anonymous study investigating Colorectal Cancer screening practices among physicians servicing the Arab American population. The findings from this research will help providers in planning for better services and shed light on the colorectal cancer screening behaviors among Arab Americans.

For more information, please contact Sahar Farah at 646-888-4469 or farahs@mskcc.org.



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