

Reducing Cancer Disparities in Monterey County Through an Innovative Community-Academic Partnership to Advance Precision Medicine Access and Delivery

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Background / Need

Low-income and minority populations experience disparities in both cancer screening and treatment, revealing disproportionately high rates of incidence and mortality, and low rates of evidence-based care.

Project Description

The objective of this project is to design, implement, and evaluate a Community Health Worker (CHW) intervention that increases access to precision medicine across the spectrum of cancer care -- from screening to diagnosis and beyond.

The pandemic forced us to remain nimble and to embroider COVID related challenges into our investigation.

To inform our development of interventions in the context of COVID, we interviewed:

- 1) community members undergoing cancer prevention/screening
- 2) patients diagnosed with cancer
- 3) stakeholders including clinical staff/leadership
- 4) care providers

Strategies for interventions included:

- 1) *Outreach* e.g. engage with community-based orgs to offer trainings on prevention for COVID and cancer
- 2) *Inreach* e.g. ID patients behind on screening for targeted phone calls and address barriers
- 3) *Engagement* e.g. host women's cancer screening clinics
- 4) Development of NCCN guideline summaries for cancers predominant in Latino populations



Outcomes / Lessons Learned

Themes from interviews/surveys with community members undergoing prevention/screening

COVID-related burdens regarding financial insecurity, limited availability of screening visits, and barriers related to caregivers accompanying patients to appointments
Disbelief and fear regarding COVID, reservations regarding testing
Learned about COVID via Spanish TV and social media

Themes from interviews with patients diagnosed with cancer

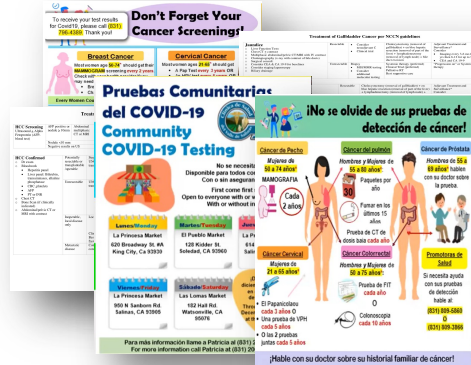
Lack of understanding of general cancer diagnosis and of tumor genetic testing
No guidance regarding next steps
Concerns regarding death, finances, and family support
Coping via friends, family, church, social workers

Themes from interview with 11 stakeholders from Monterey County

Need to collectively focus on ensuring insurance coverage for genetic testing and designing outreach programs
Need to use CHWs in these efforts

Themes from interviews with 12 care providers

Insufficient resources available to support Latino and non-English speaking populations
Significant language and financial barriers
Extensive coordination necessary to deliver high-quality cancer care
CHWs can assist with complexities of care including genetic and molecular testing



Summarized NCCN cancer guidelines and Spanish language screening info-flyers

CHW's pivotal role both in the field and in clinic

Were on the field sharing information and flyers in a variety of environment including grocery stores, school grounds, agricultural companies. Reached Latinos of all ages, mostly agricultural workers.

Made flyers as visual and easy to read understand as possible

Facilitated trust with community members and invited them for testing at multiple sites in the community

Engaged in conversations about cancers screenings and successfully scheduled patients for exams

Community Partner

The Latino Cancer Institute is a nonprofit dedicated to the improving issues around cancer for Latinos nationwide

Connects agencies working in the cancer arena to help share knowledge and best practices

In the policy realm, advocates for education, services, funding, and research that address Latino cancer concerns

Recommendations & Next Steps

CHWs can play a critical role in communities during screening/diagnosis and treatment to advance health equity and access to precision medicine.

CHWs can assist with promoting patient health literacy, referrals, financial support resources, insurance logistics, and support groups for both patients and families.

Continue to work with the community advisory board and continue taking steps to design the CHW precision medicine cancer care interventions, implementations, and evaluations.

Acknowledgements

Our wonderful Community Advisory Board

