



Anniversary Booklet



20 Years

of the **Institute for Health
Promotion Research (IHPR)**
at UT Health San Antonio



UT Health
San Antonio

Institute for Health
Promotion Research



¡Bienvenidos!

On Oct. 1, 2006, the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) was launched.

On Oct. 1, 2026, the IHPR will celebrate its 20th anniversary as part of the Department of Population Health Sciences in the School of Medicine at UT Health San Antonio.

In the past two decades, the IHPR team has worked tirelessly to achieve its mission to improve the health of Latinos and all people through research, outreach, and action in South Texas and across the United States.

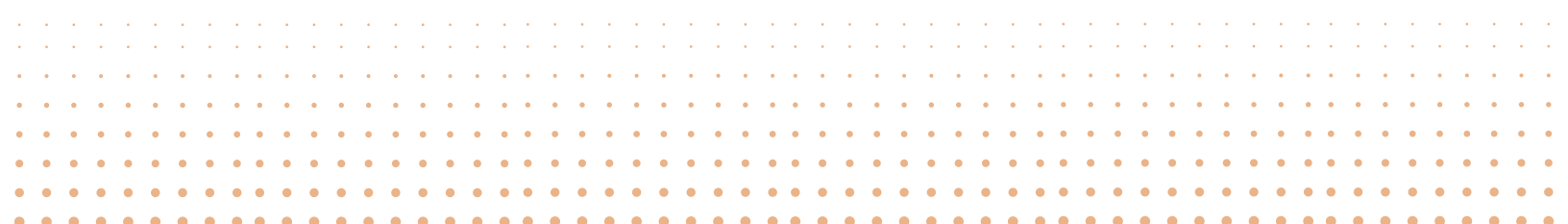
We wanted to share a little bit about the IHPR's history, accomplishments, and people in this booklet.

Thank you for coming along with us!



Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

Founder and Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research, UT Health San Antonio





IHPR Mission

Mission



Investigate causes of and solutions to cancer and chronic disease to improve the health of the South Texas population and the rest of Texas and nation.





IHPR Activities

Activities

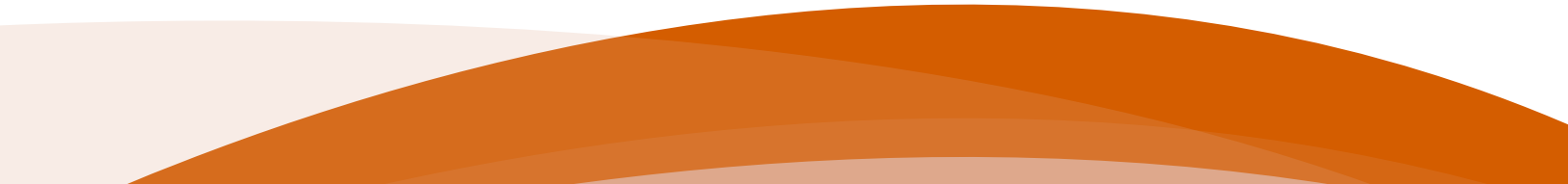
The IHPR's faculty and staff aim to:

Conduct population health studies, cancer and disease prevention and outreach programs, and randomized clinical trials that use scientific theories and methods, community-based participatory research, and collaboration with other researchers.

Train scientists and mentor young researchers and students as the next generation of cancer and disease researchers.

Communicate findings, tools, and best practices for improving health with researchers, academics, and the public using websites, social media, digital content curation, podcasts, videos, news media, public service announcements, scientific articles and reports, and more.

Find us online: ihpr.uthscsa.edu





IHPR Team

>> Faculty



Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

Professor, Director,
and Founder



Dr. Patricia Chalela

Associate
Professor/Research



Dr. Rebecca Jones

Assistant Professor
and Assistant Director



Dr. Derek Rodriguez

Assistant
Professor/Research

>> Staff



Adame-Contreras, Emiliano, Research Assistant
Arcaute, Suzerain, Grants/Contracts Spec-Lead
Cardenas, Jacqueline, Research Assistant
Carmona, Carla, Research Assistant
Carranco, Sergio, Research Assistant
Cortez, Vivian, Research Coordinator
Despres, Cliff, Senior Director, Communications
Duran Zamora, Mauren, Research Assistant
Escalante, Alyssa, Communications Specialist-Snr
Flores, Armida, Community Outreach Coord
Lew, Ysabel Rose, Research Assistant-Senior
Llamas, Sarai, Research Area Spec-Int

McGee, Tracy, Accountant-Intermediate
Munoz, Edgar, Data Scientist
Nevarez Ramos, Juan, Research Assistant
Oranday, Crystal, Community Health Worker
Orozco, Nicolette, Special Events Planner
Padron, Ivana, Research Assistant
Pinto, Courtney, Research Coordinator
Puckett, Caroline, Research Area Spec-Assoc
Rincon-Sanchez, Sonia, Community Health Worker
Sivak, Sandra, Research Coordinator
Stewart, Catherine, Communications Specialist-Snr
Zuniga, Sahira, Community Outreach Coordinator-Snr



Why Did IHPR Start?

On April 17, 2006, the Task Force on Access to Health Care in Texas released a report, *Code Red: The Critical Condition of Health in Texas*.

The *Code Red* report pointed out Texas' rising rates of cancer and disease, low rates of education, and large percentages of residents with no health coverage — all converging to threaten the state's economic and social future.



The report recommended improving healthcare in Texas with regional care districts, maximizing federal funding, and strengthening public health campaigns.

“Now is the time for Texas to take bold steps to address the problems associated with the lack of health insurance coverage and health care access to protect and assure the economic vitality and the health of the state,” according to the report.

“Properly implemented, these recommendations will improve the health of patients, families, institutions and communities while reducing the rise of health care costs that affects all Texans.”



Dr. William Henrich took the *Code Red* report to heart.

Henrich, dean of the School of Medicine at UT Health San Antonio at the time, wanted to improve health in South Texas.

So, he called Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez.

Ramirez, a pioneer in culturally relevant population health and communication research, was leading studies as a professor at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Henrich recruited Ramirez to establish the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at UT Health San Antonio on Oct. 1, 2006.

The aim was to address critical needs identified in Code Red in South Texas and beyond.

“From Day 1, Dr. Henrich shared with me the importance of compassionately serving our South Texas community,” Ramirez said. “Not only enhancing and improving our services, but he wanted to ensure our services were shaped by the voice and needs of the community to maximize our impact.”



Dr. William Henrich

Former President,
UT Health San Antonio



Big Finding

Proving Patient Navigation

Breast cancer is a top cause of death for Latinas.

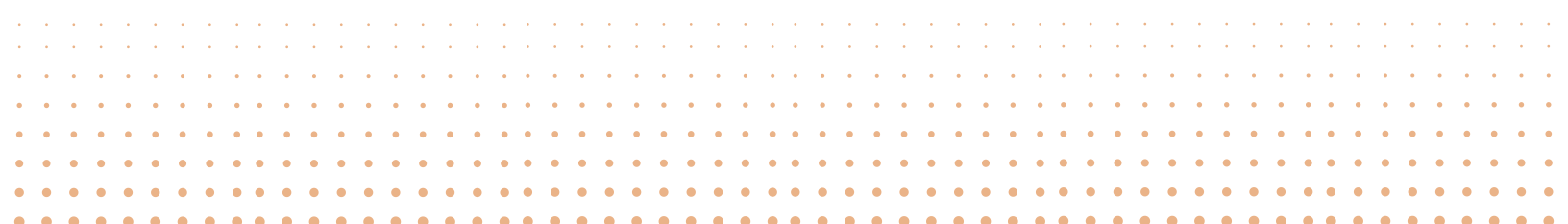
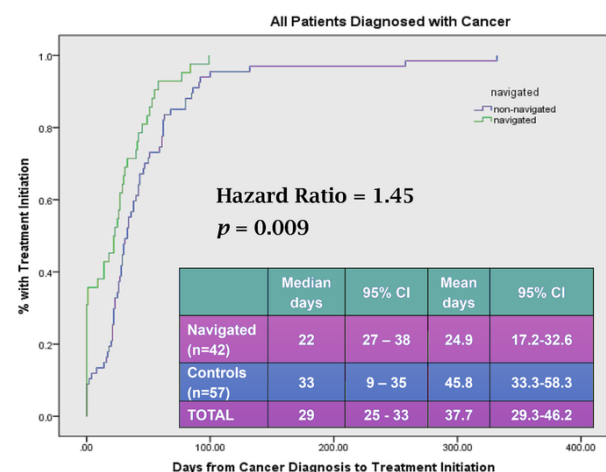
Extra support, called “patient navigation,” can lead to faster breast cancer diagnosis and start of treatment for Latinas after an abnormal mammogram result, according to several studies led by the IHPR at UT Health San Antonio.

Bilingual patient navigators worked with a group of 480 Latinas who had an abnormal mammogram. They accompanied patients to appointments, provided phone support, and helped with transportation arrangements, language translation, and insurance paperwork.

As a result, the time between an abnormal mammogram and eventual diagnosis – whether positive or negative for cancer – was significantly shortened.

Also, a higher percentage of navigated women than control women started treatment within 30 days (69.0% vs. 46.3%) and 60 days (97.6% vs. 73.1%) after their diagnosis. Navigated women typically initiated treatment in about 22-25 days. Non-navigated women typically initiated treatment in about 33-46 days.

“Our patient navigation likely saved the lives of many Latinas in the study by reducing the time to diagnosis and start of treatment,” Ramirez said.





Big Finding

Helping Smokers Quit

Smoking is still considered the leading preventable cause of disease.

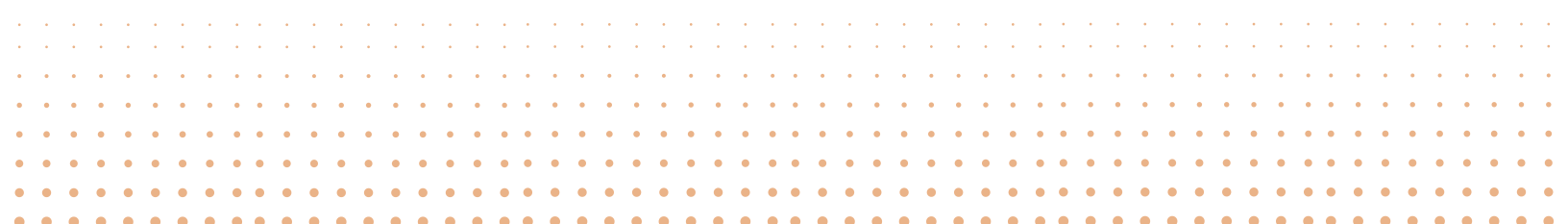
That's why IHPR researchers Drs. Amelie Ramirez and Patricia Chalela led the creation of Quitxt, a free, bilingual, evidence-based quit-smoking service for young adults using text messages and mobile media in 2015.

The original Quitxt program, funded by the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas (CPRIT), yielded a 21.4% quit rate among enrollees at 7-month follow-up.

Subsequent funding helped Quitxt add a quit-vaping version, expand to recruit smokers in rural and metro areas of Texas, and integrate referrals to the service among tobacco-using patients from Mays Cancer Center and primary care clinics at UT Health San Antonio.

Today, Ramirez and Chalela are leading a CPRIT research grant to evaluate the effectiveness of Quitxt in helping 1,200 Latino smokers quit smoking.

“From starting up a culturally tailored quit-smoking service to expanding it to a large-scale research study, Quitxt reflects our long-term commitment to empowering young adults with accessible, culturally relevant tools to quit tobacco,” Ramirez said.



Milestone Program



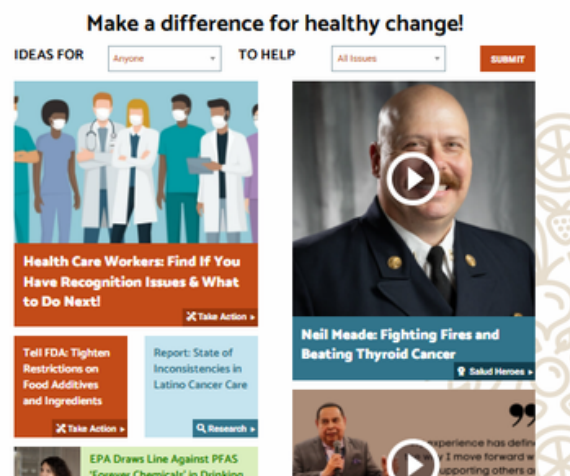
Salud America! National Health Communication Program

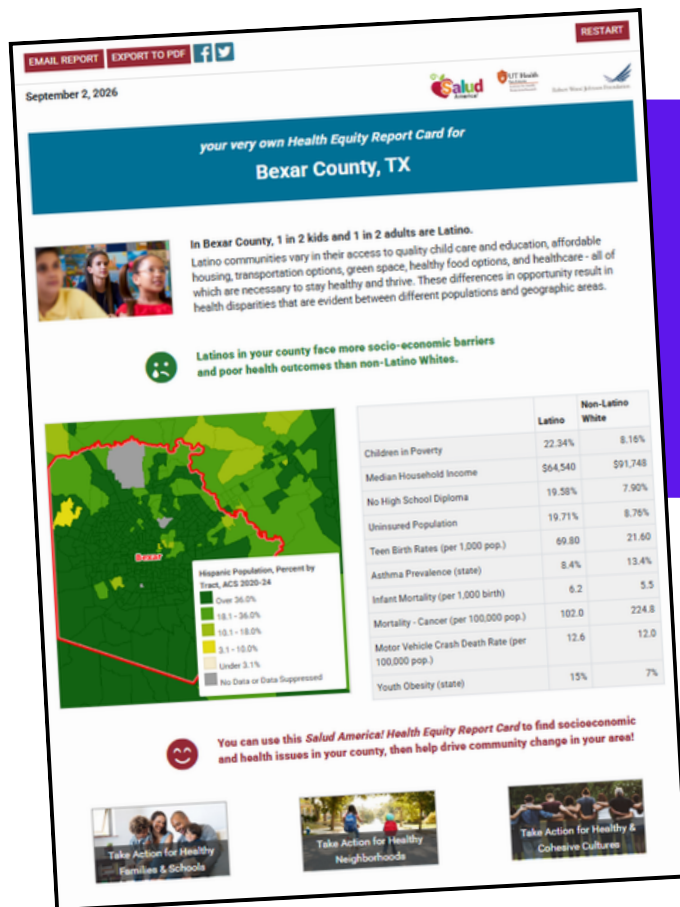
Just a year into its existence, the IHPR team created the *Salud America!* program.

***Salud America!*, funded by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2007, became the first national digital health communication network to improve Latino health.**

Over its 19 years of operation, *Salud America!* has built an online network of over 400,000 parents, community and school leaders, and health stakeholders across the U.S.

The program uses digital content curation to fuel this online network with curated multimedia research, stories, and tools to start and support healthy changes to systems and environments where Latino and all families can better live, learn, work, and play.





News Content Curation

Curated 4,299 original blog posts on health news, resource, and research.

Health Report Card

Since 2023, 28,890 people used our data visualization tool of localized non-medical drivers of health for advocacy and more

Salud Hero Stories

Interviewed and written 366 role model stories of health change makers to inspire others.

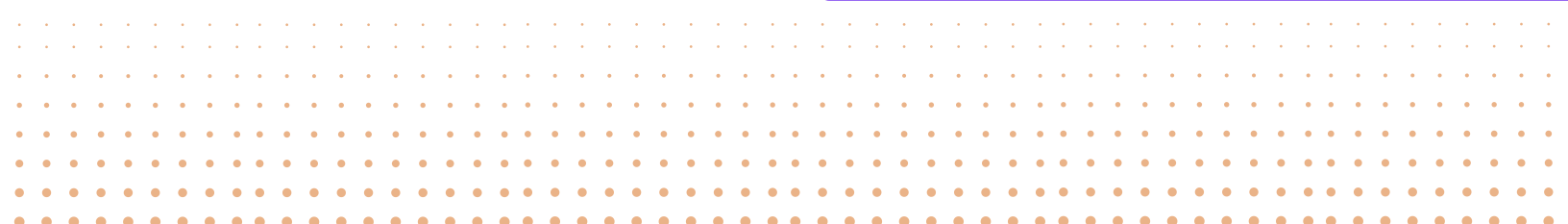
Comment Campaigns

Created 30+ comment campaigns and enabled 10,000+ people to speak up on federal health rules.

Action Packs

3,000+ advocates have used our tools to address child trauma, start school food pantries, etc.

Learn more:
salud-america.org





Milestone Program



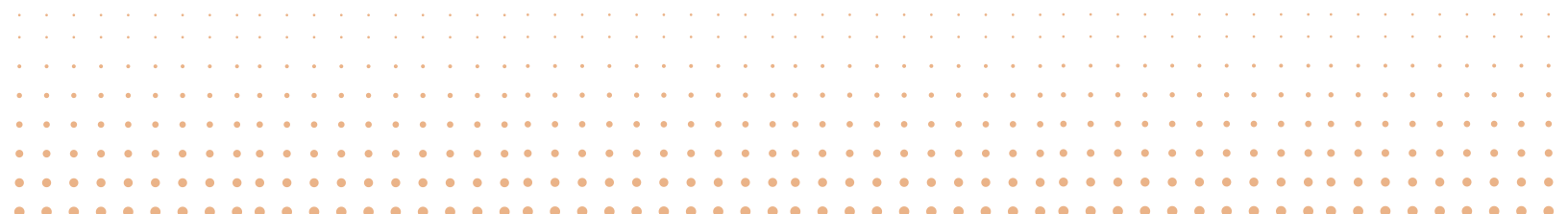
Advancing Cancer Research for Latinos and All Populations

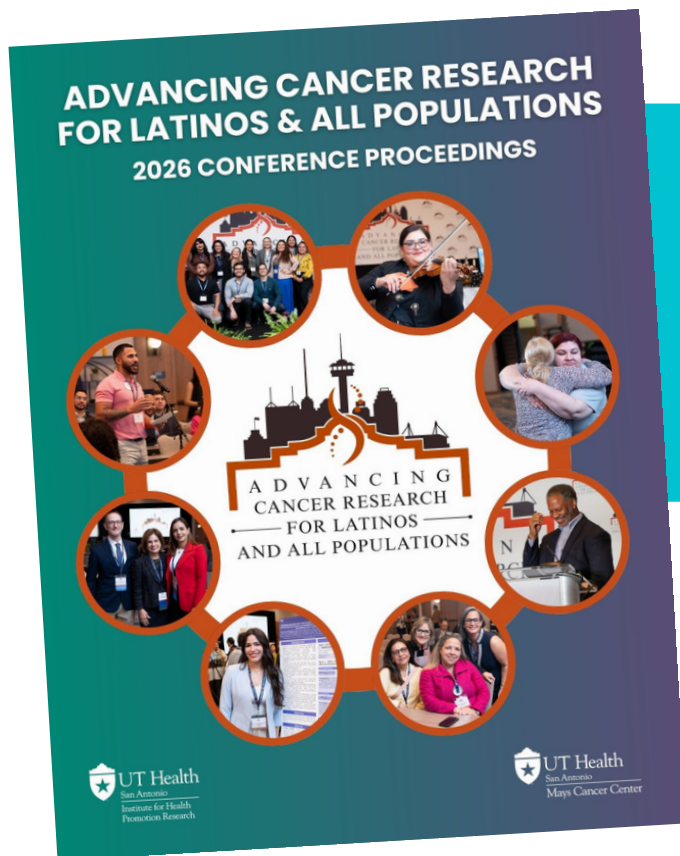
In 2018, the IHPR partnered with the Mays Cancer Center at UT Health San Antonio to host the first *Advancing Cancer Research for Latinos and All Populations (ACRLP)* conference.

The conference brought together a multidisciplinary group of professionals to review the state of the science, identify emerging issues with care, and foster collaborations to reduce cancer among Latinos and all people.

Since then, ACRLP conferences in 2018, 2020, 2022, 2024, and 2026 united over 200 guest speakers and 1,200 prominent attendees from the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Guatemala.

ACRLP conferences have generated new ideas for research, practice, and communication to address cancer and Latinos and all people, and led to multidisciplinary collaborations to build on substantial advancements in cancer from prevention through survivorship. The conference has also showcased over 400 new research studies.





Learn more:
latinocancer.org

Bringing People Together

Since 2018, the ACRLP conference has welcomed 1,200+ clinicians, researchers, leaders, and more.

Conference Reports

Read the conference proceedings and catch up on the latest cancer science
[2018](#) [2020](#) [2022](#) [2024](#) [2026](#)

Showcasing Research

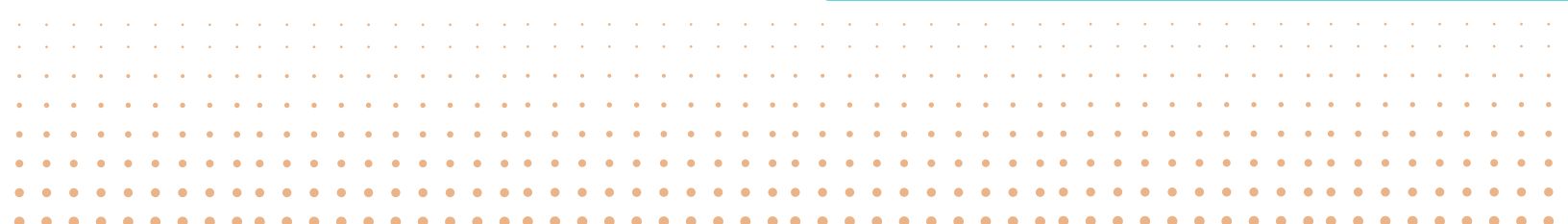
Over 400 investigators have shared their latest research during the conference poster sessions.

Addressing Many Topics

Conference covers screening, diagnosis, early-onset cancers, precision medicine, and more.

Building Networks

Networking is a conference priority, with early-career folks engaging “upstream” leadership.



Milestone Program

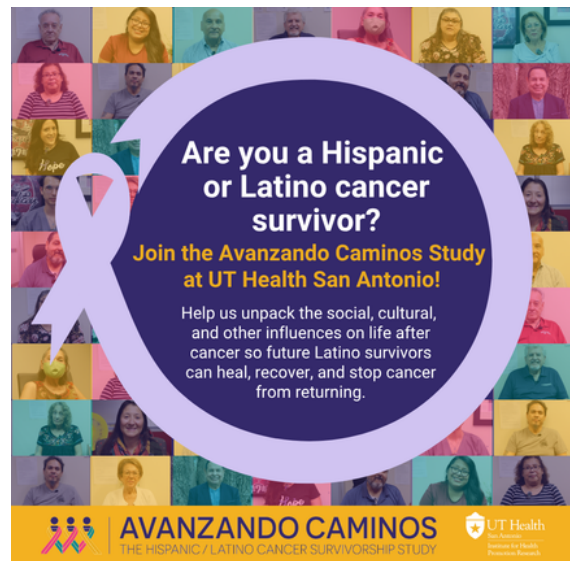


Avanzando Caminos: The Latino Cancer Survivorship Study

The good news is that the U.S. is home to four million Latino cancer survivors.

The bad news is they often struggle with advanced disease, poor quality of life, and stressful social and economic issues.

That is why the IHPR at UT Health San Antonio is co-leading the first-ever national cohort study to unpack the social, cultural, behavioral, psychosocial, biological, and medical influences on post-cancer life in Latino cancer survivors.



The study, “Avanzando Caminos (Leading Pathways): The Hispanic/Latino Cancer Survivorship Study,” is funded by a 6-year, \$9.8-million grant from the National Cancer Institute that teams the IHPR and the Mays Cancer Center with researchers at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami.

Avanzando Caminos is making progress to recruit 3,000 Latino breast, colorectal, kidney, lung, prostate, stomach, cervical, and other cancer survivors in Miami and San Antonio. Volunteers for the study are sharing their stories to help future generations of Hispanic/Latino cancer survivors.



Learn more:
bit.ly/caminosstudy

Yoli Day | Stomach

"If [a clinical trial] was something that was going to help others in the future, then I'm all for it."

Amber Lopez

Lopez, a San Antonio resident, was diagnosed with cervical cancer at age 18. Now she's sharing her story with the *Avanzando Caminos* study to give hope to others.

Rick Alvarado | Prostate

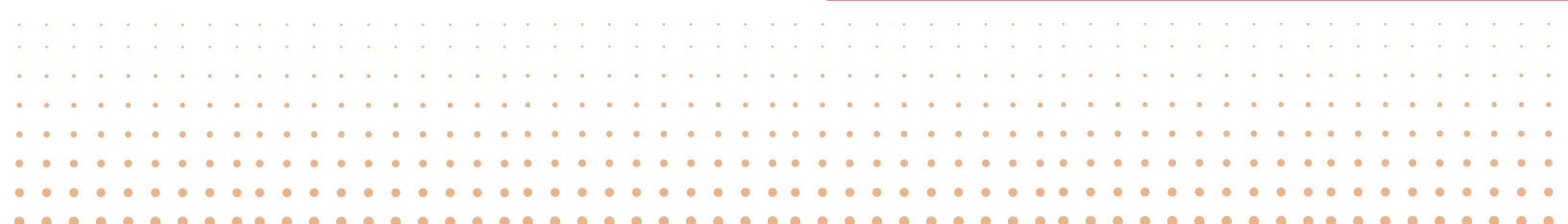
"I wanted to help other men understand that [clinical trial participation] is not a bad thing."

Linda Mota | Breast

"You're not alone. There's a lot of us that have walked through hard roads."

Angelina Vazquez | Lung

"I decided to sign up [with *Avanzando Caminos* because I hadn't heard or seen anything that was Latino specific."





Milestone Program



Redes En Acción: National Latino Cancer Research Network

Before the 1990s, Latinos were counted homogeneously in studies.

So, years before the IHPR formed, Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez led a national multi-site project funded by the National Cancer Institute that established the first comprehensive assessment of cancer risk factors among 18,000 Latinos: Mexican Americans in San Diego and South Texas; Cubans in Miami; Puerto Ricans in New York City; and Central and South Americans in San Francisco.

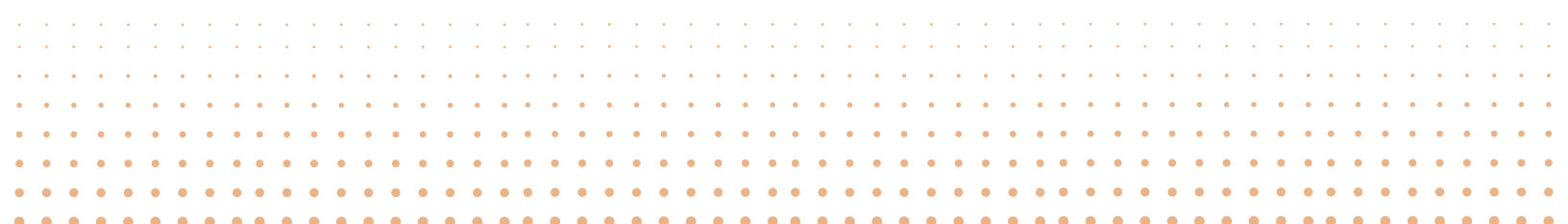


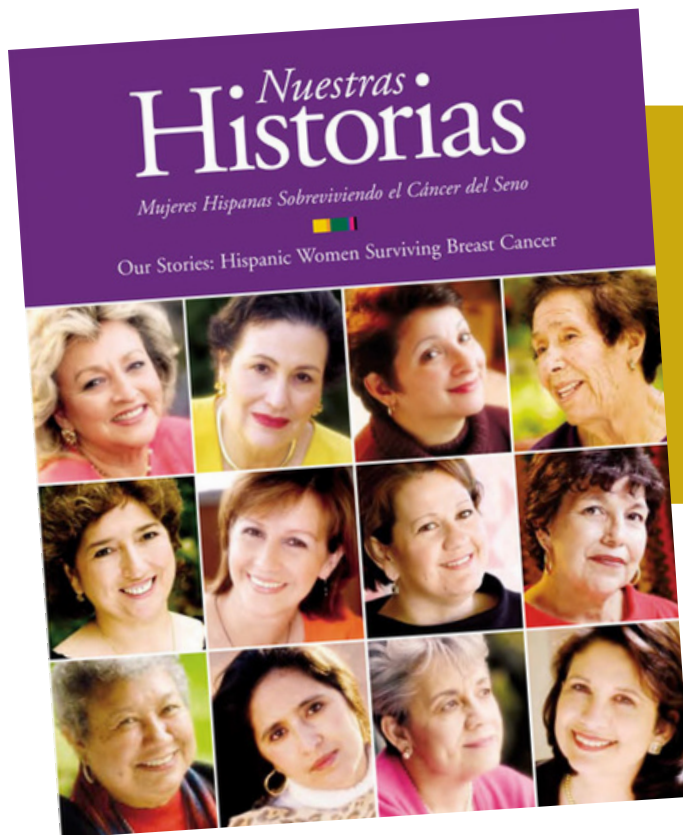
The project was first to identify risk levels, adherence to screening, and health behaviors (including smoking cessation) among Latino population groups.

Building on this multisite framework, in 2000, Ramirez developed *Redes En Acción*, a national research network for research, training, and awareness to reduce Latino cancer health issues.

Across *Redes* sites, researchers addressed tobacco use, late-stage diagnosis, screening rates, and clinical trial and genetic testing participation among Latinos. *Redes* led over 300 studies, thousands of community events, faculty training, and communications geared to reduce Latino cancer.

The program continued with the IHPR as its headquarters until 2017.





Learn more:
youtu.be/5dCr1iOUWaY

Led New Research

Redes researchers led 300+ studies, surpassing \$232 million in leveraged funding.

Nuestras Historias

Redes produced “*Nuestras Historias*,” a bilingual booklet that tells the true stories of 26 South Texans who have fought breast cancer.

Engaged People

Redes earned awards for its PSAs, magazines, newsletters, and *fotonovelas*.

Engaged Communities

Redes conducted 2,400 community events across the country on Latino cancer issues.

Training New Researchers

Redes funded 26 junior faculty who received \$1 million in funding for Latino cancer research.



IHPR Equips the Field

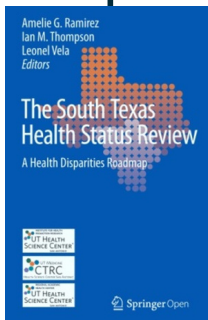
Over its history, the IHPR has made quite an impact on the scientific community and leaders.

IHPR researchers have contributed over 200 articles in peer-reviewed journals, from assessing the success of tobacco prevention campaigns to understanding the drivers of the Latino cancer burden to proving the value of digital content curation.

That scholarship stems from over 200 research projects with over \$65 million in funding over the years.

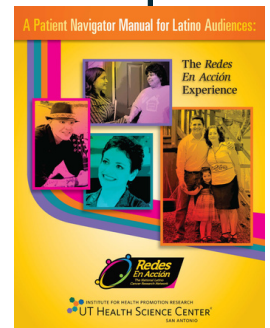
"We have a passion for transforming questions into programs and projects that can lead people to healthier lives," Ramirez said.





IHPR published its seminal report, the **South Texas Health Status Review**, in 2008. It's the first comprehensive statistical illustration of the health issues from obesity to cancer that impact residents of South Texas.

IHPR's guidebook, **A Patient Navigation Manual for Latino Audiences**, helps healthcare providers develop patient navigation services that can help Latino and all patients.



The IHPR's national **Task Force: Researchers Against Cancer** explored how Latino cancer is driven by complex interactions in 13 key areas.

IHPR's **Creando Conexiones** program worked with local cancer survivors, caregivers, and stakeholders to identify several priority areas addressing the cancer needs of South Texas.





IHPR Reaches the Community

Across its 20-year history, the IHPR has used community health workers (CHWs), including patient navigators and *promotoras de salud*, to improve cancer care in South Texas under the leadership of IHPR Director Dr. Amelie Ramirez, in collaboration with IHPR Assistant Director Rebecca Jones and IHPR researcher Dr. Patricia Chalela.

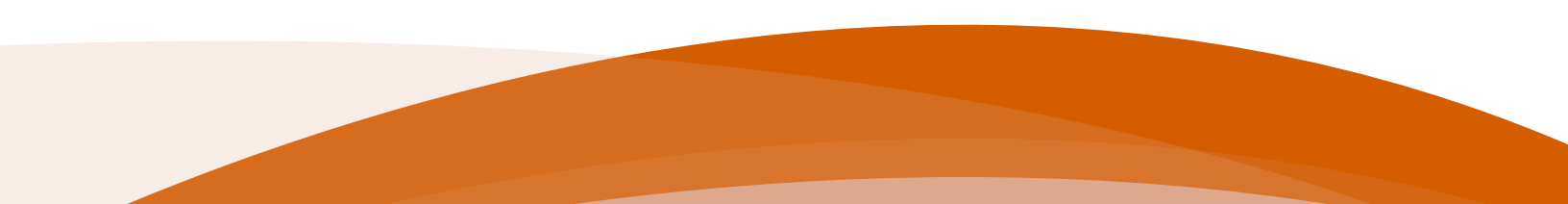


CHWs are trained bilingual, bicultural health workers who identify issues with care among the population, help people overcome those issues, and connect patients with resources and services that can improve their health outcomes.



For example, from 2020 to 2025, IHPR's CHWs have led over 300 community events and educated over 9,347 people on cancer-related care and services.

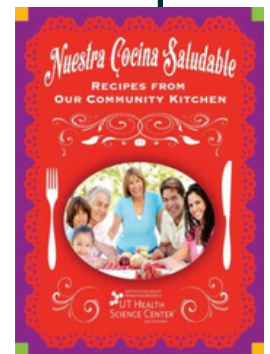
“This initiative has strengthened our capacity to expand community access to relevant educational materials and foster greater participation in clinical research,” Ramirez said.





IHPR created the culturally and linguistically relevant **HT Helper App** to promote adherence to hormone therapy and improve quality of life among breast cancer patients in the Latina community.

IHPR's cookbook, **Nuestra Cocina Saludable: Recipes from Our Community Kitchen**, helps people eat right to protect themselves and their families from cancer.



IHPR's **ACS Avanzando Salud Center** aims to improve cancer health outcomes in South Texas with community-engaged research, training, patient assessment, and advocacy.

To help reduce the cancer risk among firefighters, IHPR launched the **San Antonio Firefighters Cancer Prevention Program** with the San Antonio Fire Department and more.





IHPR Trains Future Cancer Researchers

Latinos are not proportionally represented in research, nursing, and doctoral fields, even though they make up 20% of the U.S. population.

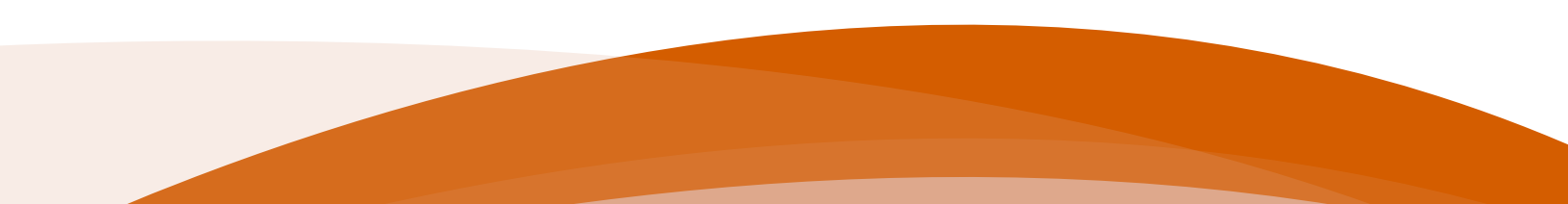
The IHPR's *Éxito! Cancer Research Leadership Training* program filled that gap for many years.

Éxito!, created in 2010 by Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, recruited 226 students and health professionals over 11 years for a culturally tailored curriculum to promote pursuit of a doctoral degree and Latino cancer research career.



Over 30% of *Éxito!* trainees have enrolled in or graduated from a doctoral program, a much larger percentage than the program's original goal.

"The program significantly increased trainees' confidence to apply to a doctoral program and academic self-efficacy," Ramirez said. "Many trainees have embarked on ground-breaking careers in cancer research."





Éxito! Trainees: Where Are They Now?



Ileana Cepeda: 2018 *Éxito!* Trainee at the IHPR

My *Éxito!* experience was incredibly inspiring and motivating. At the time, pursuing a doctorate felt like something I might want to do someday, but *Éxito!* helped turn that thought into a real goal. The experience gave me the tools and encouragement to believe I could take that next step and ultimately sparked my journey toward pursuing a doctoral degree.

I currently serve as a Clinical Research Coordinator at Children's Mercy, where I help bring pediatric research opportunities to children and families in Wichita, Kansas, including rural and Spanish-speaking communities.



Mayra Serrano: 2013 *Éxito!* Trainee at the IHPR

Participating in *Éxito!* in 2013 was a transformative experience that helped shape both my personal and professional journey. It provided a supportive community of Latino scholars, mentors, and leaders who showed me that a career in research and academia was possible. Seeing Latino faculty and researchers in leadership roles was especially powerful because it gave me role models I had not often encountered. *Éxito!* increased my confidence, expanded my network, and fostered friendships that have become lifelong relationships. The experience helped me feel that I belonged in spaces where Latinos have historically been underrepresented.

I lead Community Outreach & Engagement as Associate Director at City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center [in California].

IHPR Molds Population Health Researchers

For 20 years, the IHPR has been committed not only to advancing research and improving the health of our communities, but also to training and mentoring the next generation of public health and health promotion researchers and professionals.

IHPR faculty and research teams have collectively mentored and trained more than 200 research interns and trainees at different stages of their educational and professional journeys.

Interns and trainees are exposed to the full research process and may participate in research study implementation, participant recruitment and retention, data collection and management, literature reviews, survey development, health communication, community outreach and education, patient navigation, and the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate educational materials.

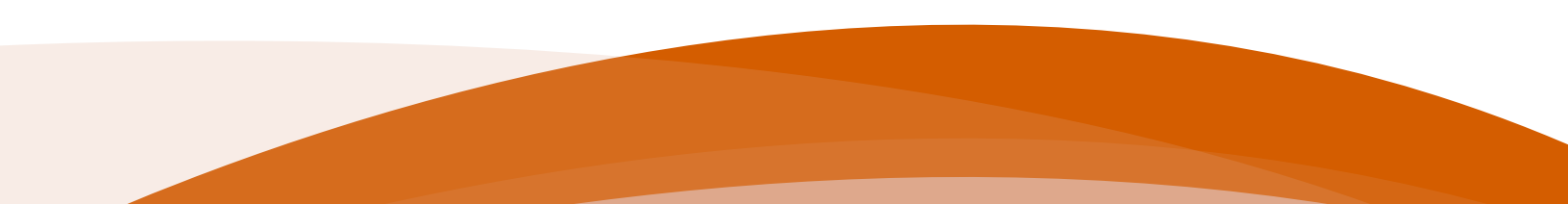
"Through our [IHPR Internship Program](#), trainees gain meaningful, hands-on experience working alongside faculty, investigators, research coordinators, and multidisciplinary research teams," Ramirez said.



IHPR interns help people explore a "megalong" to promote lung health at an event at UT Health San Antonio in 2022.



IHPR Team Together Over the Years





¡Mil gracias!

I remain grateful to the late Dr. Henrich for his initial vision to help launch the IHPR after the *Code Red* report.

Dr. Henrich died on March 14, 2024.

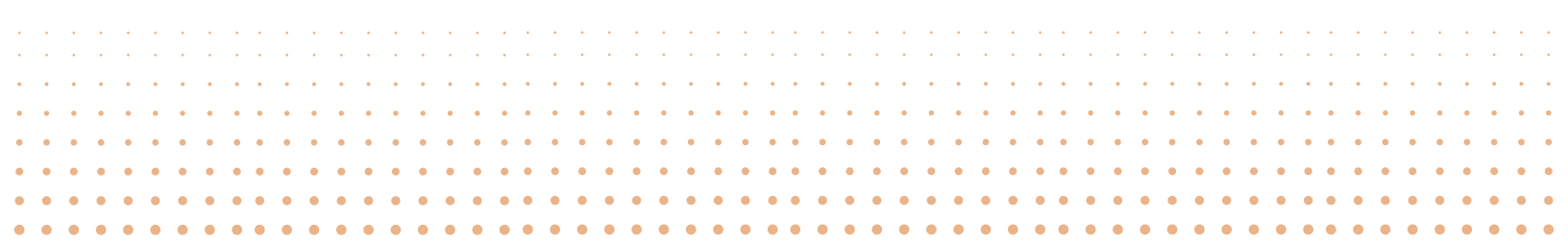
None of IHPR's accomplishments are possible without Dr. Henrich.

He was a man of faith with a big heart. He recognized the importance of reaching all our populations with fairness in health care. He always had the time to take my call and engage in conversations and to help find ways to support our efforts. His special smile and encouragement always made us want to do more.



Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez

Founder and Director, Institute for Health Promotion Research, UT Health San Antonio





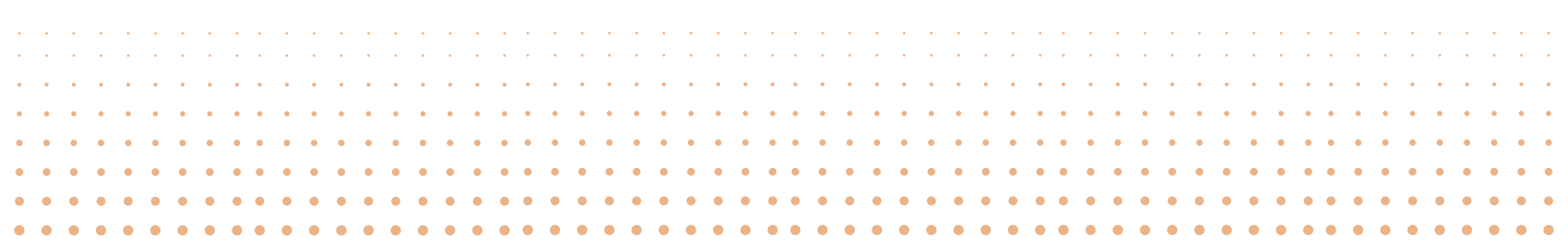
Today, looking back, leading the IHPR at UT Health San Antonio has been a rewarding journey these past 20 years.

What fills me with the greatest pride isn't just the research or programs we've created. It's students who go on to become leaders. Colleagues who inspire me every day with their passion. Community members who trust us to tell their stories. Decision-makers and funders who listen and respond with support to improve health.

We remain as committed as ever.

And I remain as hopeful today as I was when we first began the IHPR that we will achieve even healthier communities for all of our families.

Amelie G. Ramirez



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