



Immigrant Health & 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: Julie Levison, MD, MPHil, MPH, Associate Physician in the Department of Infectious Disease/Medicine, Brigham & Women's Hospital, presented **"Barriers to Retention in Chronic Medical Care for US Immigrants: Lessons from South Africa HIV Epidemic"**; Rachel Shelton, ScD, MPH, Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociomedical Sciences, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health, presented **"Understanding and Addressing Cancer Disparities Using a Social Contextual Approach"**; Talar Markossian, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Jiann-Ping Hsu School of Public Health, Georgia Southern University, presented **"Cancer Outcome Disparities and Patient Navigation"**; Sue Kim, PhD, MPH, Research Scientist at the Petris Center, University of California, Berkeley, presented **"Telephone Care Management's Effectiveness in Coordinating Care for Medicaid Beneficiaries: A Randomized Control Trial"**; Jack E. Burkhalter, PhD, Assistant Attending Psychologist on the Behavioral Sciences Service, MSKCC, presented **"Addressing Cancer-Related Health Disparities in Sexual Minority and HIV-Infected Populations"**; and Chasity Walters, RN, Director of Patient Education, MSKCC, spoke about the mission and activities of the patient education department.

IHCD members gave numerous presentations. Francesca Gany, MD, MS, Service Chief, presented **"Disparities and Diversity in Research"** at the Department of Surgery 2012 Summer Research Methods Lecture Series. Jennifer Leng, MD, MPH, Assistant Attending, presented **"Assessing Dependence Among Users of Heterogeneous South Asian Smokeless Tobacco Products"** at the National Cancer Institute Smokeless Tobacco Research Grantee Meeting in Houston, Texas. Dr. Leng also spoke about Chinese immigrant health and cancer disparities on the Herald Cancer Care Network Radio Program, broadcasted from Santa Clara, CA. Lisa Diamond, MD, MPH, discussed **"Careers in Health Disparities Research"** at the Second Annual Successful and Productive Academic Research Careers Junior Conference at the Weill Cornell Medical College.

The IHCD Service hosted a delegation of medical professionals from Syria as part of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program: **Fighting Cancer: A Project for Syria**. Francesca Gany, MD, MS, Claudia Ayash, Co-Director of the Arab Health Initiative, Sahar Farah, Community Outreach Coordinator, and Julia Ramirez, Community Outreach Manager, all presented on the IHCD's outreach and research initiatives.

Funding Updates

Lisa Diamond, MD, MPH, has received funding for an R21 from the National Cancer Institute for her project **"The Impact of Physician Non-English Language Proficiency Level on Cancer Screening."** The goal is to identify whether primary care clinicians with varying levels of non-English language proficiency reliably self-assess their own non-English language proficiency levels. Dr. Diamond will also explore factors that may be associated with accurate self-assessment of non-English language proficiency and evaluate whether cancer screening rates for LEP patients differ with varying clinician non-English language proficiency.

Staff Updates

The IHCD Service is pleased to have hosted a cohort of talented interns over the summer. Interns were involved in various capacities and made important contributions to IHCD programs. A big thank-you to Imran Ahmed, DDS candidate at the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education; Constance Brady, MSW candidate at Columbia University; Tala El-Yousef, MPH candidate at Columbia University; Amalia Gonzalez, Sc.B; Cara Haas, BA candidate at Princeton University; Jocelyn Howard, MA candidate at Columbia University; Hannah James, BA candidate at Cornell University; Kishor Kapa, BA; Yasmin Khan, MPH; Sara Maimouni, BA candidate at Wells College; Suzanna Nguy, BS; Alisha Polewarczyk, MPH candidate at NYU; Girish Ramrattan, BA candidate at Hunter College; Anna Sadovnikova, BA candidate at UC Berkeley; Umma Saima, BA candidate at Fordham University; Sarimer Sanchez, Doctorate of Medicine candidate at the University of Puerto Rico; Emily Serwer, BA candidate at Bowdoin College; Jeffrey Shenfeld, BA; Bahia Wahba, BA; Kate Weisberg, MPH candidate at NYU; Maria Xia, MFA; and Xu Xinran, MA candidate at Hunter College.

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Department of State International Visitor Leadership Program



IHCD 2012 Summer Interns



Memorial Sloan-Kettering
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Program 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 Integrated Cancer Care Access Network meetings to train cancer service providers and engage CBOs, cancer service providers, social workers, and immigrant advocacy organizations to brainstorm effective advocacy measures. Our July meeting was a great success, with more than 30 agencies represented. Our next meeting is scheduled for November 13, 9:00–11:00 AM. For more information, 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 early September, we organized a community health fair in the Bronx, in partnership with the Fouta Union, a West African community-based organization, and Urban Health Plan. We provided free health screening services to nearly 50 participants. We will continue to follow up with participants and case manage them into the healthcare system. SAHI is gearing up for a busy autumn season. We look forward to community health fairs on September 30, in partnership with United Sikhs at the Sikh Cultural Society in Richmond Hill, Queens, and on October 14 at the Diwali Mela in Jackson Heights, Queens. We are also pleased to announce our upcoming SAHI Board Meeting on October 9. For more information about SAHI's activities, please e-mail 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. The Arabic-language *AMBER (Arab American Breast Cancer Education and Referral)* Support and Education program for breast cancer patients has resumed its monthly sessions. The group provides women diagnosed with breast cancer with an opportunity to share experiences and discuss various education topics. We have updated our materials in preparation for our busy fall schedule, which includes workshops, health fairs, and van screenings in Brooklyn and Queens. Additionally, we continue to work with our partner hospitals and the Cancer Services Program to help women obtain screening mammograms. We are working on our 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, contact Sahar Farah at farahs@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. The IHCD continues to visit the Mexican Consulate in New York City on a weekly basis. This year, the twelfth Bi-national Health Week (BHW) will take place October 1–14 in at least 40 US states and three Canadian provinces, with the participation of the consular networks of Mexico. BHW fosters community solidarity by bringing together existing resources and thousands of volunteers working together for a common goal. The events are coordinated through collaboration among community and government agencies from the United States, Mexico, and other Latin American countries with the purpose of reaching out to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable people, especially those without medical coverage. During BHW, the IHCD will work closely with the VDS partners and community-based organizations to conduct a series of health promotion and health education activities that include workshops, insurance referrals, vaccinations, and medical screenings. For more information, contact Julia Ramirez at ramirej1@mskcc.org.

Food to Overcome Outcomes Disparities (FOOD)

The FOOD program is a hospital-based pantry project to identify and address food insecurity among cancer patients with cancer. The program continued to expand this summer, opening hospital-based pantries at Lincoln Medical Center and Queens Hospital Center. FOOD pantries now provide weekly grocery bags to food-insecure cancer patients at five cancer centers throughout the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens. The FOOD program staff collaborates with hospital staff to address patients' difficulties in accessing food during their treatments. In addition to the weekly grocery bag of staple items, pantry participants in the Bronx, Harlem, and Central Brooklyn have been receiving Health Bucks for fresh food. Health Bucks are \$2 coupons from the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene that can be redeemed at farmers' markets citywide in exchange for fresh fruit and vegetables. Patients and caregivers at Lincoln Hospital and the Ralph Lauren Center also had the opportunity to participate in farmers' market tours to meet farmers and receive additional discounts on regionally grown produce. This initiative runs through November, providing patients with five months of access to affordable fresh produce. For more information about the FOOD program, and to support our efforts to supply patients with high-quality food during treatment, contact Josh Wessler at wesslerj@mskcc.org.

The Language Core

The Language Core helps to equip researchers with the tools to enroll and serve diverse populations in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. The program's involvement spans a wide range of projects, which include such diverse topics as genetics, melanoma risk among Latinos, lymphedema and gynecologic cancer, employment in low-proficiency cancer survivors, and the development of support and survivorship interventions for Chinese cancer patients.

In terms of educational endeavors, the program conducted a two-week intensive training in Rochester, NY, in August to help the Rochester General Medical Group build a solid core of capable medical interpreters. The medical interpretation training's language-specific component included five languages: Somali, Nepali, Karen, Burmese, and Spanish.

PROMISE, the Program for Medical Interpreting Services and Education, is entering its second year. The program trains unemployed or underemployed individuals, including veterans and the disabled, in medical interpreting and job skills, and assists them in finding jobs. Our goal is to train 65 individuals. We are actively recruiting new participants for our training cycles. The first training is scheduled to take place from October 10 to November 16; the second from December 5 to December 21; and the third from January 9 to January 25. Participants must be unemployed, bilingual, and residents of NYC. We are especially interested in veterans. For more information, contact Javier Gonzalez at gonzalc3@mskcc.org.



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