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REDUCING CANCER DISPARITIES THROUGH AN INNOVATIVE COMMUNITY ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP

The Latino Cancer Institute and California's Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine partnered with local healthcare organizations to reduce disparities and improve cancer treatment amongst low-income and racial minority individuals in Monterey County. Through an iterative process of needs-assessments and deliberation with partners, we are developing a community health advocate (CHA) model for implementing precision cancer care across the entire continuum of care (screening, diagnosis, and beyond).

CHAs were trained during the COVID outbreak. Determined to remain nimble in the context of a pandemic, we performed needs-assessment surveys and interviews with patients which revealed opportunities for CHAs to offer cancer education, assistance with referrals, and resources for psychological and financial assistance. COVID introduced burdens regarding financial insecurity, limited availability of screening visits, and barriers related to caregivers accompanying patients to appointments. The community bore disbelief and fear regarding COVID along with reservations regarding testing. The majority of individuals learned about COVID via Spanish television and social media.

We designed and distributed cancer screening flyers that contained information regarding common cancers along with information regarding COVID tests and contact information for our CHAs and partner clinics. Environments served included grocery stores, schools, and agricultural companies. Populations reached were predominantly Latino agricultural workers.

We are currently designing and plan to present workshops on risk factors that affect the community, use social media to amplify information that the community finds useful, engage the community through zoom meetings, outreach events, and clinics, and make CHAs more visible as part of the patient's care team.

Our CHAs also performed COVID outreach testing. In December 2020, COVID testing was done at five different locations throughout Monterey County, with 50-120 community members tested at each event.

Qualitative key informant interviews with individuals in Monterey County have revealed a paucity of knowledge regarding obtaining cancer screening and familiarity with genetic testing. Those under the age of 40 find social media to be a more helpful venue for health information and those over 40 prefer health information over the phone or through the mail. Interviewees felt as though CHAs were beneficial but were still unsure of the precise role they would play. Men were less familiar with cancer screenings than women.

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