

THE TISCH CANCER EQUITY LAB



FALL 2020



THIS ISSUE

Community Education
and Outreach

**Cancer
Prevention**

**Advance
Health
Equity**

**Engaging
Communities**

WHY FOCUS ON HEALTH EQUITY?

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States. Due to racist and exclusionary policies and systems, racial/ethnic and other minority communities often have higher cancer incidence and death rates. The mission of the lab is to eliminate health inequities in cancer. In service of our mission, we are committed to: (1) community engagement, outreach, and education; (2) research; and (3) clinical practice.

The Office of Community Engagement, whose mission is to engage local community members in facilitating access to cancer early detection and appropriate treatment, is committed to developing and implementing community-based culturally relevant educational programs across in the communities of New York City. This mission includes the goal of promoting health equity by providing culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and helping people access the health care system. We work in collaboration with the Office of Community Engagement in our Health Equity Lab to engage in work to eliminate health disparities in our cancer programs.

The Tisch Cancer Institute and the Cancer Equity Lab is grateful to our communities' for their participation in both our educational programs as well as our research projects. This newsletter reports back some of our findings. We look forward to our continued partnerships. If you have any questions, or would like to get involved in our programs, please contact Lina Jandorf: lina.jandorf@mssm.edu or 212-659-5506.

In this issue, we focus on our ongoing community education and outreach efforts. The next newsletter will summarize our remote research activities.

COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

THE WITNESS PROJECT OF HARLEM

Based on an educational model first developed at the University of Arkansas in 1991 in response to racial disparities in breast cancer. Statistics published by the National Cancer Institute show that Black/African American women are more likely than other groups to be diagnosed at later and less curable stages of breast cancer and are more likely to die of the disease. The Witness Project of Harlem seeks to address these disparities by having cancer survivors openly share details about their diagnosis and treatment and confront the fear and silence that cancer evokes in many women, particularly in the Black community. At the same time, it also celebrates the rich tradition of faith that is shared by many people of African descent. In the wake of COVID-19, we have worked to continue to do community outreach to Black women around breast cancer. We have currently moved to 100 percent virtual programs and are looking for community members who would be interested in hosting these programs with their various groups and organizations. Our virtual presentations are hosted via Zoom and all presentations can be modified to accommodate the needs of the organization. We have also added a section that addresses access to care while remaining within the safety guidelines of COVID-19. We want to continue to provide education and access to women interested in getting their annual screens. For further information or to schedule a presentation please contact Brittney Henry at Brittney.Henry@mssm.edu or (212)824-7081.

ESPERANZA Y VIDA (E&V)

An NYC community-based cancer education program that teaches with and learns from the Latinx/a/o community. We focus on sharing information about what cancer disparities are, why they exist, what preventative screening tools are available, and learning about the experiences that Latinx/a/os have had with cancer and screening care. To share and learn with the Latinx/a/o community we build community partnerships with NYC schools, churches, immigrant centers, community centers, cultural centers, and other local leaders in the community. EyV also trains community members as Promotores, who can facilitate conversations with their community members about cancer, share information about cancer disparities and feel confident connecting community members to existing resources. We are currently expanding the EyV program and are looking for any Latinx/a/o community members that are interested in becoming Promotores, and community organizations that might be interested in partnering and/or looking for educational programming. Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, we have worked to continue to do community education work online and if needed over the phone. As of now, our virtual presentations are hosted through Zoom. Please reach out to our EyV Program Coordinator Jennifer Ulloa at jennifer.ulloa@mountsinai.org for more information.

THE CENTER FOR SPIRITUALITY AND HEALTH AT THE ICAHN SCHOOL OF MEDICINE- M.I.C.A.H. PROJECT HEAL

The Center for Spirituality and Health and the Tisch Cancer Institute have had the opportunity to partner with and train community members (many of whom are health ministry leaders) from both Faith and Community Based organizations as Community Health Advisors-CHAs. M.I.C.A.H.™ which is the Multi-faith Initiative on Community and Health at MSHS, led by Rev. Dr. Zorina Costello, was initially started in 2016 with the input of a community advisory committee. Project HEAL which is the acronym for Health Through Early Awareness Learning is a program which has developed multiple curriculum and trained our CHAs about each topic and how to teach their local church and/or community. Since 2017, subject matter experts from MSHS have contributed to the development of evidenced based robust teaching materials in mental health, diabetes, heart health, smoking cessation, life style medicine, colorectal and prostate cancer, cognitive decline, and oral health. Educational modules have inspirational scriptures and an interactive approach that seeks to motivate congregations to be more proactive about getting appropriate screenings, increasing awareness about signs and symptoms of diseases, and the management of health concerns. Due to current COVID-19 protocols, we have begun to work with our CHAs to teach the curriculum via Zoom. Since 2017, the program has reached over 3,000 persons. During this challenging time when health care disparities are impacting the most vulnerable communities, teaching people how to be more aware, proactive and advocate for their own health and that of the community is a priority. For more information, please contact Dr. Zorina Costello at Zorina.Costello@mountsinai.org.