

Latin America

In Latin America, more than 70 percent of cancer patients are diagnosed when the disease is incurable. To address the cancer burden in this region, the American Cancer Society uses its more than 90 years of experience to bring together Latin American governments, civil society, cancer survivors, the media, and the public to save lives through proven interventions to advance cancer prevention, early detection, and patient care.

By partnering with the leaders of cancer control nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), we strengthen their capacity and their cancer control efforts, sharing best practices and creating critical links between them. We work with key health care, NGO, and government leaders in Latin America to improve cancer control policies and empower patients and families.

The media has been a critical link in giving a human face to cancer, decreasing the stigma of a diagnosis, and turning cancer survivors into advocates for policy change related to prevention, detection, and treatment. We have conducted media outreach throughout Latin America, and participated in press conferences involving key cancer control events and training.

Strengthening Our Latin American Partners

Our initiative in Latin America focuses on increasing civil society engagement in cancer control through trainings, technical assistance, funding, and building institutional capacity in cancer control advocacy and policy planning, patient empowerment, tobacco control, and NGO management.



Our programs are based on a combination of evidence-based cancer control interventions and accurate, current Latin American market information. We have identified key partners, needs in the health care system related to cancer, and low-investment/high-return projects for funding.

Our largest program, the Latin America Regional Health Grants Program, unites, empowers, and strengthens cancer control NGOs by giving the appropriate tools and funding to a network of NGOs from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Venezuela. This three-year initiative supports cancer early detection activities through trainings, customized technical assistance, tailored capacity building, media outreach, and Web-based communication strategies to connect the NGOs and increase the impact of their cancer programs.



Catalina Agosin (center) from Chile wins the Volunteer of the Year award at the Premio Excelencia Latina awards ceremony.

Since 2002, we have conducted American Cancer Society University (ACSU) trainings in the United States and Latin America. Our signature training program has brought together about 100 scholars from 12 Latin American countries to focus on volunteer management, fundraising, media outreach, tobacco control, and cancer control planning. After the series of week-long trainings, participants apply for seed grants to implement community-based cancer and tobacco control projects. This unique program combines tailored training with funding opportunities for NGO leaders to develop community-based projects, share best practices, and learn from peers and mentors throughout their project implementation.

Recognizing the outstanding work of our Latin American partners is instrumental in building momentum, awareness, and support of their efforts. The American Cancer Society regional award, the Premio Excelencia Latina, recognizes leaders among NGOs who demonstrate best practices in volunteerism, patient services, education, and networking. Sharing best practices within the cancer community enables successful programs to be replicated in other markets. Along with the award, the outstanding leaders are given small grants to support their programs.

Leading the Change

Creating an environment for policy change is integral to the Latin America program, and working with top government leaders is instrumental in advancing cancer control through planning and policies. In Mexico, we piloted the Comprehensive Cancer Control Leadership Forum along with the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and

the National Cancer Institute (NCI). In Peru, we facilitated and funded the formation of Peru's first National Cancer Control Plan. This type of funding and support encourages the government to accelerate policy changes to limit the spread of this disease.

A successful cancer control program must take on the tobacco industry in regions where it continues to launch well-funded marketing campaigns. Through fellowships, grants, and regional forums, we have provided financial support and worked with Latin American health care leaders to specifically address advocacy efforts to create and enforce smoke-free and taxation policies.

Cancer control must be a collaborative effort between governments, medical communities, and civil society. Together with our partners, our Latin American efforts focus on bringing together cancer survivors, policy-makers, and civil society to save lives through advocacy, awareness, and building the capacity of our local partners to effectively address all aspects of the cancer continuum.

For more information on our global programs, please visit our Web site at www.cancer.org/international.



Patient navigation fellows from Mexico visit the American Cancer Society's Midwest Division.



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