

# Promoting Energy Balance among Latinas:



## A Church-Based Approach

Institute for Health Promotion Research

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio



# Investigators



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# Funding Sources

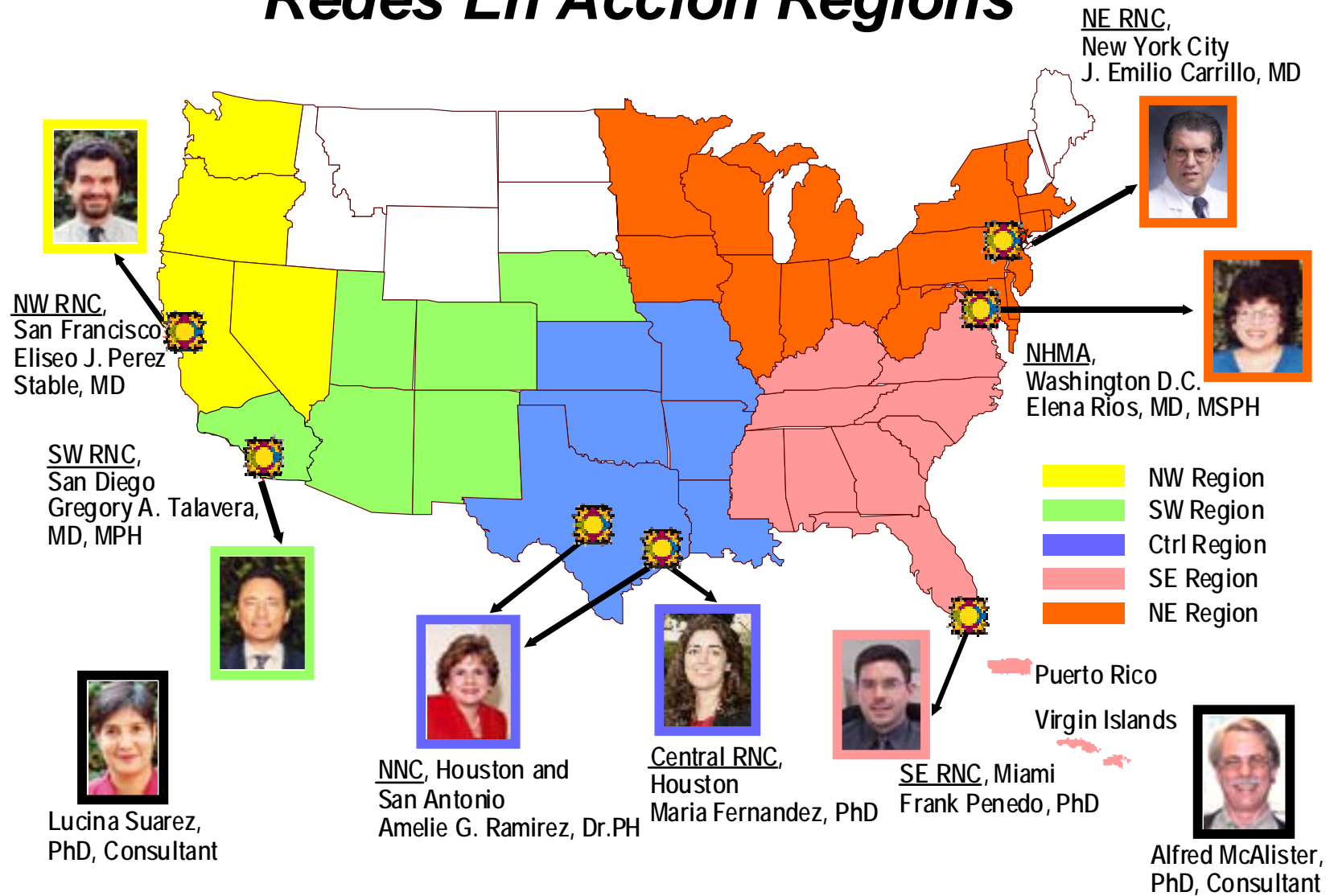


**The National  
Hispanic/Latino  
Cancer Network**

**National Cancer Institute's  
Center to Reduce Cancer  
Health Disparities**

**Grant Number:  
3U01 CA86117-05S2**

# Redes En Acción Regions



# General Background

- ▶ Risk factor for many cancers and other diseases
- ▶ National epidemic
- ▶ Energy balance: energy in = energy out
  - Diet, physical activity and genetics
- ▶ Second largest preventable cause of death
- ▶ 14% of all deaths from cancer
- ▶ Latinos are specially affected:
  - 62% overweight; 23% obese
  - Mexican American: 73% overweight/obese
  - Women over 40: 81% (overweight/obese)

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# Purpose



**WHAT:** an evidence-based church program to promote energy balance

**WHY:** to assess knowledge, attitudes and behaviors about nutrition and exercise

**WHO:** Latinas over 40 years old

**WHERE:** a low-income community in Houston, Texas

# Target Area

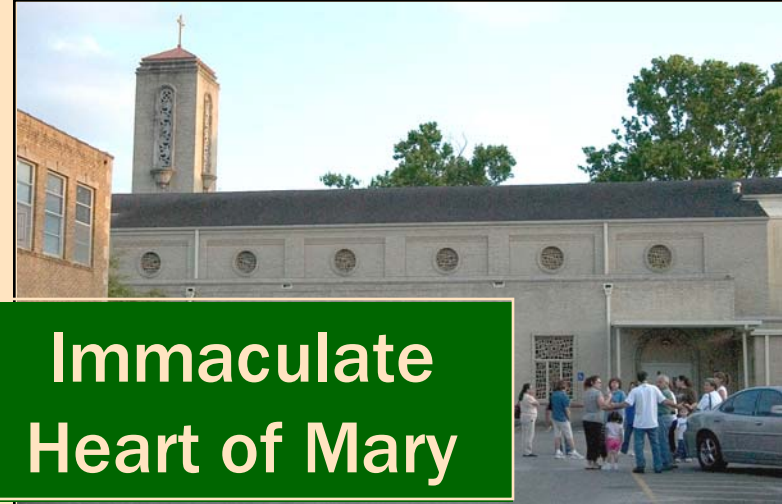




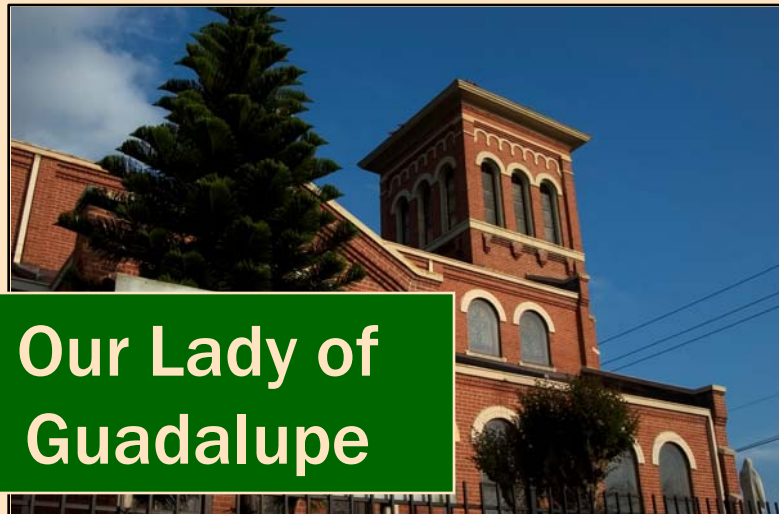
# Methods



**Immaculate  
Conception**



**Immaculate  
Heart of Mary**



**Our Lady of  
Guadalupe**

# Methods

## ► Recruitment:

- Flyer with church bulletin
- Phone call one week before the meeting
- Convenient time & location

## ► Data collection:

- IRB
- Bilingual moderator
- Consent form
- Audiotape
- Transcripts of all sessions



## ► Data analysis:

- Qualitative content analysis: categories & themes

# Results



- ▶ Average group size: 7 participants
- ▶ Mean age: 56 years
- ▶ Marital status: 57% married
- ▶ Education: 24% some high school
- ▶ Family income: 64%  $\leq$ \$20,000

# Results: Nutrition

## ► Barriers

- Lack of awareness
- Cultural beliefs
- Budget limitations



- Family preferences
- Lack of time to prepare meals → lack of regular schedule to eat meals

# Results: Nutrition

## ► **Motivating Factors**

- **Cooking classes in small groups**
- **Education: how to buy & cook healthy traditional food on a limited budget**
- **Education: relationship between nutrition & health/disease**
- **Education at church will address other barriers and provide a familiar environment**



# Results: Physical Activity

## ► Barriers:

- Safety concern and fear of going out to exercise
- Limited resources in the community
- Cost of existing programs/resources



# Results: Physical Activity

## ► Barriers:

- Lack of motivation – “*flojera*”
- Lack of social/family support



- Lack of education
- Cultural factors
  - *Machismo*
  - Modesty
  - Familism
  - *Novelas*

# Results: Physical Activity

## ► Motivating factors

- Education about benefits – small groups
- Programs that address cultural factors & are offered at convenient times
- Programs at church would provide a safe, convenient & familiar environment
- Preferred activities:
  - Walking
  - Dancing
  - Aerobics
  - Swimming
  - Bicycling
  - Yoga





# Results: Church Involvement

- ▶ Facilitating space for cooking/nutrition and exercise classes
- ▶ Creating groups for nutrition and exercise
- ▶ Providing classes with people who know about the topic
- ▶ Having an active participation of the priest



# Results: Information Preferences

- ▶ **Doctors, nurses & health care professionals**
- ▶ **Priests**
- ▶ **Other: TV, libraries, the Internet & books**
- ▶ **Education/information should be provided in person, specifically through group session and activities**
- ▶ **Materials/messages should be in both Spanish and English**



# Conclusions

- ▶ **Using the church is a feasible and culturally appropriate strategy.**
- ▶ **Important information for the design & implementation of culturally sensitive & tailored church-based programs**
- ▶ **Women & community leaders should be involved in all phases of the program**

# Conclusions

## ► Limitations

- Sample was self-selected and Catholic, low income Southwestern US Latinas
- Strategies were drawn from the Guide to Community Preventive Services and used across all 4 studies
- More research is needed

**MIL GRACIAS**