

Improving Clinical Trial Participation for Latino Pediatric Cancer Patients

With additional funding, a program at Rady Children's Hospital will continue its mission to help Latino families impacted by cancer.

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A pilot program at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego that focuses on diversifying participation in pediatric cancer [clinical trials](#) will expand thanks to a \$4 million grant.

Latino families have been historically underrepresented in clinical trials. What's more, research shows that, by 2060, Latino children will comprise about 33% of the U.S. population and have a higher incidence of certain cancers including leukemia and lymphoma, according to a [Rady news release](#). Despite this, their participation in biomedical research is very low.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and National Cancer Institute (NCI) awarded the Research Project Grant to Paula Aristizabal, MD, MAS, a pediatric oncologist at Rady Children's Hospital in San Diego and associate professor of pediatrics at the University of California San Diego and Moores Cancer Center.

The Childhood Malignancy Peer Research Navigation (COMPREHENDO) program was established in 2018 to improve Latino participation in [pediatric](#) cancer clinical trials. The success of the program earned Aristizabal and her team the NIH/NCI grant to continue efforts and implement a culturally and linguistically tailored peer-navigation intervention.

"We are thrilled with this additional funding," said Aristizabal in the [news release](#). "Now COMPREHENDO will be able to grow and expand across the country to many diverse communities, where children will have better access to excellent care, as we have here in San Diego at Rady Children's Hospital."

In the new peer model, parents of children who have had cancer will receive specialized training to work with parents of children who have cancer to help guide them through the cancer diagnosis and present them with the option of receiving treatment as part of a clinical trial.

With increased participation in clinical trials, Aristizabal and her team hope to improve clinical outcomes and survival among all ethnicities.

“I have always been an advocate for the vulnerable,” said Dr. Aristizabal. “My passion to improve care and survival in underserved children stems from witnessing health disparities firsthand.”

The program has already had success in improving clinical outcomes and overall survival rate in children across the U.S.-Mexico border. In this population, through mentoring, addressing infrastructure needs and training clinicians in specialized patient care, the overall five-year cancer survival rate has increased from 10% in 2008 to 62% in 2022, according to the news release.

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