

## SUMMARY

LUNA is a non-profit organization that provides health education, health navigation, and emotional support to cancer survivors, and their families, in the Latino community. In order to accomplish its goals, LUNA has implemented the program ENLAXC. ENLAXC strives to decrease health disparities by providing culturally and linguistically relevant programs to empower underserved, Spanish speaking individuals touched by cancer by enhancing their knowledge and coping skills.

## PROGRAM GOALS

**Goal 1:** To reduce barriers and facilitate access to care and psychosocial services by linking Latino cancer survivors living in Hillsborough County to programs offered by LUNA and/or linking them to services in the community.

**Goal 2:** To provide cancer survivors access to emotional support in their native language.

**Goal 3:** To further develop a detailed strategic plan for our organization.

## CHALLENGE

The psychosocial effects of a cancer diagnosis have significant impact on the lives of cancer survivors and their family, increasing the need for social support. Research indicates that ethnic minorities (e.g., Latinos) and individuals of low socioeconomic status are less likely to get optimal health care following treatment for cancer than Whites and/or individuals of higher socioeconomic status. This may be attributed to barriers they experience in obtaining optimal health care including: logistical (e.g., transportation, housing, unemployment, lack of financial assistance); language and cultural barriers (e.g., difficulty speaking/reading English, lack of readily available information in Spanish); emotional barriers (e.g., fears of treatment effects, family/financial burdens, stress, depression); and health care system barriers (e.g., lack of insurance, lack of information regarding post treatment follow-up). Efforts to improve the survivorship among minority populations such as Latinos are a national priority according the IOM's 2005 report "From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Translation."<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Institute of Medicine. (2005). From cancer patient to cancer survivor: Lost in translation. Washington, DC: Committee on Cancer Survivorship: Improving Care and Quality of Life

## SOLUTION

In order to link Latino cancer survivors to programs offered by LUNA and/or linking them to services in the community LUNA members were trained to be *Mujeres*



*Empoderadoras* (community lay health workers). These women work jointly with the Health Navigator to improve the survivor's interaction with the healthcare system as well as promote LUNA's services.

The second goal, which consisted of providing emotional support, was implemented through monthly support groups. A trained bi-lingual social worker, health educator or mental health counselor facilitated sessions that address fears related to diagnosis and treatment, stress management skills, nutrition, treatment side effects, self-image concerns, relationship issues, and sexuality, among other topics. All sessions were provided in Spanish and employed culturally appropriate strategies such as open discussion around the table (it is around the kitchen table where most important conversations take place in Latino homes), sharing something to eat, the appropriate use of humor, and re-connection to hope and faith. Thanks to a partnership with Moffitt Cancer Center, LUNA was able to hold all support group meetings free of charge in the Center's facilities.

*"I had been to a survivorship group for young people but I didn't feel that warmth and sense of family. I have found that with LUNA. This is my home."*

**Rosalinda O. – Cancer survivor  
LUNA Secretary**

Lastly, a comprehensive strategic plan was developed to create a solid foundation for



LUNA's future. Felix Haynes, a strategic planning consultant, Dr. Dinorah Martinez-Tyson from the College of Public Health (COPH) at the University of South Florida (USF), and Ina Hysi, a COPH graduate student, assisted LUNA's Executive Board in the revision of bylaws, creation of a mission and vision, and development of Advisory Board.

## RESULTS

Goal 1: Six of LUNA's members participated in the *Mujeres Empoderadoras* training, a number that exceeded our expectation of four. Participants varied in age and cancer diagnosis making it possible for LUNA to link new members based on specific needs. Thus far each *Mujer Empoderadora* has been assigned to at least one new LUNA member and has assisted with linking members to the appropriate healthcare resources. The women have also promoted LUNA's services by participating in health events such as USF's Men's Health Forum and Moffitt Cancer Center's "Salud es Vida" series and they have distributed LUNA's brochures to local hospitals, clinics, and cancer centers.

Goal 2: A process evaluation, in the form of a survey, was carried out for the monthly support group; participants' feedback revealed a desire for more active gatherings. To address this want, the following meetings consisted of Luna's edition of Jeopardy – a fun, interactive game filled with cancer-related categories - and a Zumbathon event in Al Lopez Park.

Goal 3: Thanks to the collaborative efforts between Mr. Haynes, Dr. Martinez-Tyson, and Luna's Executive Board, LUNA has created a mission, revised its vision and its bylaws, and developed an Advisory Board. The organization now possesses a stable structure and a clear vision of its future path.



## SUSTAINING SUCCESS

ENLAXC's goal is to prepare LUNA to become an even more prominent community organization and increase the amount of Latino cancer survivors it reaches. Thus far LUNA has grown its membership list to include over 300 individuals. The Executive Board along with the *Mujeres Empoderadoras* have a deep commitment to promoting LUNA's services and have already been out in the community doing so. LUNA is also very interested in diversifying its member base to include more men. It continues to partner with USF and Moffitt Cancer Center to participate in health events focused on men's health. Fortunately building on ENLAXC's success will not be difficult since LUNA counts on dedicated members who have been volunteering with the organization for more than ten years.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CONTACTS



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