

## April 10 - 16 is National Minority Cancer Awareness Week



The Office of Cancer Health Disparities Research (OCHDR) at Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI) is celebrating two significant events in April: National Health Disparities Month and National Minority Cancer Awareness Week (April 10-16). OCHDR is again collaborating with local stakeholders and partner organizations as part of its NOWUKNOW initiative to educate at-risk populations to begin talking to their doctors about what might put them most at risk for cancer and the benefits realized from participating in early detection or screening programs.

“These two prestigious events in April help to foster partnerships with local agencies and organizations to develop programs that reach underserved communities with information about cancer prevention, early detection, cancer treatment and research,” said Terry Alford, OCHDR Community Relations Coordinator. “Our overall goal is to provide those most in need of information about cancer with the tools and support that could save their lives. In 2015, our office reached over 4,000 people with its community outreach programs and activities.”

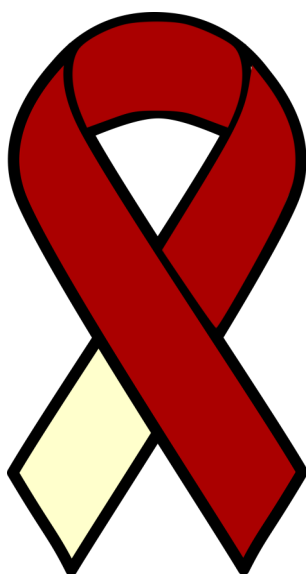
Inequalities in the delivery of health services are more often seen among minority groups and low income populations. The overall objective of the OCHDR is to eliminate health disparities in cancer care. Monthly observances such as National Minority Cancer Awareness Week provide an opportunity for individuals to help change these disparities.

“The OCHDR is presently working with its 30-plus NOWUKNOW partners, which includes a number of churches and community-serving agencies and organizations throughout the Buffalo-Niagara region, to schedule cancer-specific community presentations and activities,” said Alford. “We will also work with our partners to conduct a needs assessment survey to measure their beliefs, attitudes, experiences, and knowledge about cancer in an effort to assist in creating unique cancer education programs that will be more effective and productive.”

If your organization would like to get involved or if you would like more information about the NOWUKNOW initiative, call 1-877-ASK-RPCI (1-877-275-7724), or go online at: [www.roswellpark.org/now-u-know](http://www.roswellpark.org/now-u-know).

## Community Connections

# April is Also Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month



April is Oral, Head and Neck Cancer Awareness Month—the perfect time to learn more about your risk factors. Unlike a mammogram, a PSA test, or other routine cancer screenings, oral cancer screening is something most people don't think to ask their doctors about. Because oral cancer affects a smaller portion of the population—about 3 percent of annual cancer cases—many aren't even aware of the risk factors.

But catching oral cancer early is key to survival. The survival rate for oral cancers diagnosed at early is about 80 percent. However, when diagnosed later after cancer spreads, the survival rates can be as low as 30 percent.

What are the most common risk factors? Using any kind of tobacco and alcohol use has been shown to increase the risk of oral cancer by about 30 percent. Additionally, oral cancer often comes back, so having had oral cancer previously can put someone at high risk of being diagnosed again.

In recent decades, research has been devoted to the link between the human papillomavirus (HPV) and oral cancer. While HPV is a common virus that is

often defeated by a healthy immune system, sometimes it can hang around and the virus can increase your risk of developing cancer, particularly on the back of the tongue or tonsils.

Regardless of your risk factors or medical history, if you see white or red lesions or patchy spots anywhere in your oral cavity, tell your doctor immediately. Paying attention to changes to your body and acting on them quickly can often mean the difference between life and death.



# Do You Want to be a ROCK Star?

Have you ever been interested in scientific research with a focus on cancer? Do you have a desire to make a difference for your loved ones and your community in reducing their chances of being diagnosed with cancer one day? If you are a cancer survivor, have you ever wondered how by sharing your personal experience of your battle with the disease could help to maybe one day find a cure?

If you've answered "yes" to any one or more of those questions, you sound like a candidate to become a ROCK (Research, Oncology, Community and Knowledge) Star advocate.

What are "ROCK" Star advocates? These are research advocates that:

- ◆ Help RPCI cancer researchers design, develop, implement and share cancer research projects and their results
- ◆ Speak to legislators about important cancer policies and pending laws
- ◆ Make a difference in the science that is helping to cure cancer

"ROCK" Star advocates will receive training on most aspects related to clinical research.

When a new funding application is being prepared, advocates will be paired with RPCI cancer research scientists who will be in need of advocates' assistance.

Beginning in March, the OCHDR took the first-

step in assembling a "ROCK" Star team comprised of people from the community to work with RPCI cancer researchers. We need more advocates and you are invited to participate. If this sounds intriguing to you and want to learn more, please call Christy Widman at (716) 845-5814, or email her at [Christy.Widman@roswellpark.org](mailto:Christy.Widman@roswellpark.org).



## Community Connections

### OCHDR Staff Member Takes on Additional Role

A familiar face in the OCHDR and the community at large has recently taken on a whole new role. Isnory Colon, a Health Referral Specialist with the OCHDR for four years, is now also a Patient Navigator.

Patient Navigators are trained professionals who guide patients through the cancer treatment process, helping them overcome any obstacles that may prevent them from starting or continuing treatment. They provide direct assistance at RPCI and also connect patients and families to community agencies that can help them meet other challenges that result from their cancer diagnosis.

Looking at Colon, it is easy to see she is a natural for the position. Besides her work at Roswell, she is active in her community and is a certified Spanish-English interpreter. She also organizes the *Esperanza y Vida* community breast cancer screening program. "I've worked in the community for four years and I am also the daughter of a breast cancer survivor," Colon said. "I am from the community so when they (the patients) see me, they see a familiar face and trust me."

In order to become a Patient Navigator, Colon went through an intensive two-day training at the Harold P. Freeman Patient Navigator Institute in New York City. There she learned the step-by-step process of guiding patients through the treatment process as well as studying privacy laws and the history of patient navigation.

For Colon, her two different jobs don't seem separate but all part of a seamless role in helping others. "My work experience is very unique," she said. "I screen patients (in her Health Referral Specialist job) and now I can follow them through the whole process from screening to diagnosis to navigating them until the end

of treatment and helping them along the way."

The obstacles to getting treatment can be huge, ranging from lack of transportation to language barriers, insurance issues and child-care needs. "Navigators can help them if they have income problems, social work needs, lots of needs, since once they are diagnosed, help is available," said Colon. She familiarizes patients with RPCI's Resource Rooms, for example, and puts them and their families in touch with support groups, social workers and community agencies that can help overcome any problems that may keep them from starting or continuing treatment.

Colon is one of three Breast Cancer Patient Navigators at RPCI. The other navigators are Diann Farley and Jennifer McCabe, Patient-Care Navigator. For more information on the RPCI Patient Navigator Program, call 716-845-1542 or 1-877-ASK-RPCI, or visit [www.roswellpark.org](http://www.roswellpark.org).



**Isnory Colon with Harold Freeman, founder of the Harold P. Freeman Patient Navigator Institute**

## OCHDR Researcher Receives Special Recognition



The OCHDR's own Elisa M. Rodriguez, PhD, was recently honored with the Outstanding Achievement Award at the Women Making History Sixth Annual Awards Gala, March 19, at Classics V Banquet and Conference Center in Amherst, NY. The event was sponsored by Utopian Euphoria, LLC.

Rodriguez, an Assistant Professor of Oncology and Director of Community Engagement in the OCHDR, was surprised and humbled by the award. "It was a surprise to me," she said, "but it's always nice to be recognized, especially from a local community organization that tries to promote diversity. It's a humbling experience – you feel honored."

Rodriguez is happy that she was able to celebrate the award along with family members and close friends. Her husband Joseph Reyes, Dr. Deborah Erwin, PhD, director of the OCHDR, and several other Disparities staff members were there to cheer for Rodriguez as

she received her award. "It was a fun event," she said. "It was a nice way to celebrate recognition from the community because I was able to celebrate with my family and close work friends."

Rodriguez has been focused on achieving for a long time. She first got the bug to be a cancer researcher when her great-grandmother died of bladder cancer when Rodriguez was 10 or 11 years old. "I didn't understand anything about cancer then, but I understood what her relationship had meant to me. I tried to understand what she had suffered and what she had meant to people. It's a hard thing for people to deal with but really an important calling to be able to support people in whatever capacity you can in that process."

Rodriguez earned a bachelor's degree in sociology/ anthropology from Canisius College and then came to Roswell Park for her master's degree in Natural Sciences. She earned her PhD from Johns Hopkins in Baltimore and then made her way back to Roswell. "I love the staff and people I work with," she said. "Everyone is hardworking and brings something new to the table."

Others say the same about Rodriguez. Dr. Martin C. Mahoney, MD, Staff Physician in Medical Oncology, was Rodriguez's advisor back when she was at Roswell earning her master's. He says of her, "She's a hard worker, full of potential, fun, and well liked."

Her husband is also a big supporter. "Joe always appreciates my work," Rodriguez said. "I'm different. I'm not one to toot my own horn – I'm more low-key."

Rodriguez and her husband live in Hamburg with their daughter, Chloe, 1½.

## Community Connections

# MANUP Buffalo Participates in the 23rd Annual Cavalcade of Cars

In February, members of the MANUP Buffalo prostate cancer awareness advocacy group, along with organizers of the 2016 6th Annual “Cruisin’ for a Cure Buffalo” Car Show and Prostate Cancer Screening event, participated in the 23rd Annual “Cavalcade of Cars” at the Hamburg Fairgrounds in Hamburg. “The purpose of our volunteers participating in this three-day event is to launch our promotional efforts to inform car enthusiasts that attend events such as these about our own car show in September,” said Richard Satterwhite, MANUP Buffalo President.

“At this event, our volunteers also disseminate important information about

prostate cancer and the benefits of talking to your primary physician about early screening for the disease if you display one or more risk factors.”

This year’s “Cruisin’ for a Cure Buffalo” Car Show will be held at Roswell Park Cancer Institute on Saturday September 24, 2016, from 9 am until 4 pm, rain or shine (shelter will be available in case of bad weather). Prostate cancer education and screenings will begin at 11 am until 2 pm. To pre-register for screenings, call 1-877-ASK-RPCI (1-877-275-7724), or go to [www.roswellpark.org](http://www.roswellpark.org). You are also encouraged to find us on Facebook at “Cruisin’ for a Cure Buffalo”.



***The MANUP Buffalo booth included the “Just Blue” classic car owned by fellow member Charles Chandler***



***MANUP Buffalo member Rich Davis discusses prostate cancer awareness with Cavalcade of Cars attendees***



***(From left to right) Tom Rommel, Carl Russo, Richard Satterwhite, and Eddie Webber enjoying the show***

## Governor Cuomo Announces Bridge of Hope Dedicated to Cancer Survivors at Canalside Buffalo

In March, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced the dedication of the Commercial Street Bridge at Canalside as the “Roswell Park Cancer Institute Bridge of Hope.” As part of the dedication, patients from Roswell Park Cancer Institute gathered at the bridge to celebrate surviving cancer with a ceremonial hanging of ornamental bells on the bridge. The ceremony was hosted jointly by Roswell Park and Canalside Buffalo.

There is a widespread tradition at cancer centers throughout the country that when a cancer patient finishes treatment, he or she celebrates by ringing a bell. From this iconic location in the City of Buffalo, the Bridge of Hope at Canalside gives cancer survivors the opportunity to hang a bell to honor their survivorship.

“Cancer survivors are among the strongest and bravest individuals that a person can ever meet,” said Governor Cuomo. “The Bridge of Hope at Canalside will be a

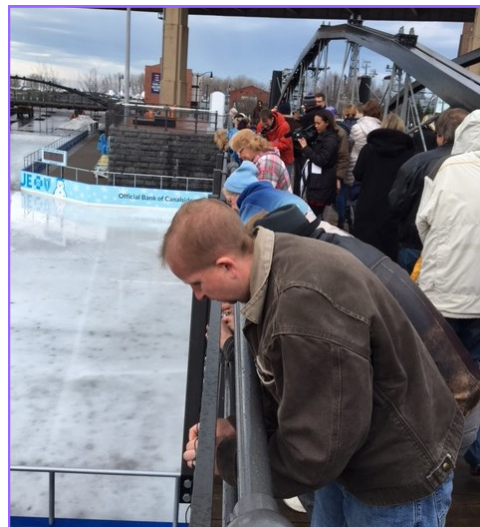
special way for survivors to celebrate their victory over this disease, and it will stand as a reminder to all of their determination and perseverance. I commend Roswell Park Cancer Institute for both helping to make this project a reality, and for helping so many New Yorkers reclaim their lives from cancer.”

Diagnosed with advanced breast cancer in 2009, Averl Anderson has embraced cancer survivorship by becoming a passionate advocate for breast cancer prevention and for participation in clinical studies. “The Bridge of Hope is a place to stand in awe of good fortune and good medicine,” said Anderson. “Cancer is a great teacher of life lessons. The Bridge of Hope is a place to pause and reflect on how far we, as cancer patients, have traveled and to embrace the moments and days to come.”

For more information about the “Bridge of Hope” or where ornamental bells can be purchased, call 1-877-ASK-RPCI (1-877-275-7724), or go to [www.roswellpark.org](http://www.roswellpark.org).



*(Top) Averl Anderson addresses fellow cancer survivors at the Bridge of Hope dedication; (Right) Cancer survivors hang ornamental bells on the Bridge of Hope*





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Want to catch up on past editions of the Community Connections  
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[www.roswellpark.edu/prevention/cancer-health-disparities](http://www.roswellpark.edu/prevention/cancer-health-disparities)

