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Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence

Impact
Report
2021





Support the outreach, engagement, and research activities of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence with a tax-deductible contribution. give.rutgers.edu/cancerhealthequity

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Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence

Executive Summary | Impact Report 2021

We are delighted to share our annual impact report on the work of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence, a formal partnership between the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and Rutgers School of Public Health.

Established in 2019 and guided by our mission, vision, and 2019–2025 Strategic Plan, the Center has undertaken an ambitious mix of strategies and activities focused on achievements supporting five pillar goals. Advances made in 2021 are yielding transformative results that will impact awareness, prevention, and care for years to come.

Pillar 1: Structure

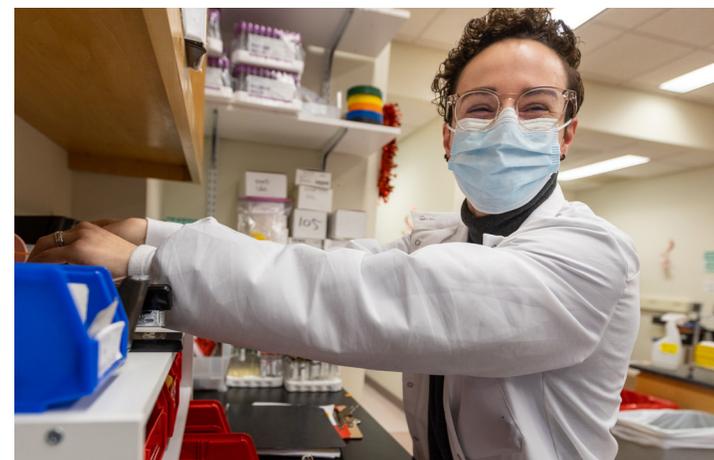
In 2021, the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence continued to strengthen its foundation and grow its resources to better serve New Jersey communities. Officially designated a “Center of Excellence” by Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, funding increased from \$5 million to \$7 million, thanks to enhanced support from the New Jersey Department of Health for the [ScreenNJ](#) program. These funds also enabled an expansion of staff to carry out ScreenNJ’s cancer screening and risk reduction work, including a new statewide patient navigation team. Meanwhile, the Center’s membership—researchers, healthcare practitioners, educators, community stakeholders, and community outreach professionals—increased by 28%. And new communications and marketing materials were created to support visibility and awareness efforts.

Pillar 2: Research

The Center fosters interdisciplinary, [community-engaged research](#) addressing New Jersey cancer priorities and cancer health equity in populations suffering disproportionate cancer burdens. To support its robust research activities, in 2021 the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence created the powerful [STRIDE](#) data and visualization platform. [Disparities-focused cancer health research](#) was supported by grants totaling more than \$500,000, awarded by the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence to 11 investigators for projects ranging from triple-negative breast cancer disparities to the patient/caregiver dyad. In addition, programs sparking results-oriented exchange of knowledge and ideas around research included four “Works in Progress” meetings; a forum for researchers; Community Scientist input on grant applications; and the new Science Cafés program, bringing together researchers and community members.

Pillar 3: Education & Training

The Center strengthens the ability of professionals and volunteers to promote cancer health equity—from post-secondary students to faculty and public health practitioners. In 2021, the Center continued to implement innovative [Project ECHO](#)® initiatives, using this proven tele-mentoring approach to improve patient care outcomes. The Center was designated an ECHO Hub, and completed the first Spanish-language ECHO program of its kind. A Center-organized retreat facilitated collaborations



Mission

Advance the achievement of equitable access, improved health care quality, and better outcomes across the cancer continuum—prevention, early detection, treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care—through:

- Research
- Education and training
- Community outreach and engagement
- Public policy advocacy





Vision

Be the leading center in the nation for achieving cancer health equity, improving the quality of cancer care, and reducing the cancer burden.



between researchers and community members, and a distinguished lecturer series featured six speakers who provided diverse perspectives on cancer health equity research. The first cohort of Rutgers Cancer Institute-certified [Community Scientists](#) graduated—prepared for participation in research proposal reviews, research advisory committees, and scientific review boards. A second cohort is in training.

Pillar 4: Community Outreach and Engagement

The Center's dedicated Community Outreach and Engagement team spans New Jersey, promoting bi-directional, meaningful participation in the design and implementation of education, research, and dissemination of information supporting cancer prevention and control. In 2021, this work vastly improved cancer screening access for colorectal and lung cancer—above and beyond set goals; expanded partnerships to 137 organizations, with 215 clinical and community partner sites statewide; established a Latino Advisory Council for the New Brunswick community; grew the Center's Nurse Navigator network to 124 members promoting lung cancer screenings; and brought researchers and cancer health equity thought leaders together for two Community Cancer Action Board meetings where they shared vital information about breast cancer care of Black women and biorepository/biobanking consent.

Pillar 5: Policy

The Center advocates for local, state, and national policy rooted in evidence-based approaches to achieving cancer health equity. In 2021, impact at the state level included collaboration with the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy to analyze cancer screening data and produce a policy report—

[Trends in Cancer Screening Among Medicaid Enrollees in NJ: 2011–2017](#)—revealing that cancer screening rates in New Jersey are lowest for Medicaid recipients, with wide geographic variation in disparities. And the *New Jersey Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan* was developed by the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence's leadership and members in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health and community stakeholders across the state. At the national level, it was my pleasure to present at the American Cancer Society's *Future of Cancer Care* forum about how health equity can be advanced via cancer policy.

My deepest gratitude and respect to our community partners, staff, and faculty for their dedication and expertise, that continues to have a positive, measurable impact throughout New Jersey and beyond.

Sincerely,

Anita Kinney, PhD, RN, FAAN, FABMR
Professor, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, School of Public Health;
Director, Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence;
Associate Director for Population Science and Community Outreach, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; Director, ScreenNJ



To learn more, visit cinj.org/CancerHealthEquity



1

Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence

PILLARS OF SUCCESS

STRUCTURE



3

POLICY
EDUCATION AND TRAINING



5



2

RESEARCH



4

COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Structure



Established in 2019, the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence strives to be a national leader for achieving cancer health equity, improving the quality of cancer care, and reducing the cancer burden. In 2021, we strengthened the Center's foundation to broaden our identity, expand the infrastructure of our organization to better serve New Jersey communities, and to be recognized as a Center of Excellence.





Key Updates and Impact

Center of Excellence Designation

The Cancer Health Equity Center was formally designated a “Center of Excellence” in 2021 by Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey. This prestigious designation was attained through rigorous review by the Institute’s director and its Officers Cabinet. It recognizes that the Center meets the highest standards in all areas of operation and impact, including an exceptionally collaborative team that provides leadership, best practices, research, support, training, information dissemination, and community services addressing cancer health equity, with the ability to attract new, talented, and diverse team members.

40% Increase in Funding

The Center’s budget growth of 40% over the previous year is due to augmented funding from the New Jersey Department of Health to expand cancer screening and prevention outreach services through the ScreenNJ program.

28% Increase in Membership

Year over year, the Center’s membership increased organically from 71 members in 2020 to 90 in 2021 as a result of the Center’s growing visibility throughout the state. Members include researchers, physicians and other healthcare practitioners, educators, and community outreach professionals. [See the full list of members.](#)

A 40% funding increase enables exponential growth and reach throughout New Jersey.



A partnership between the Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the New Jersey Department of Health, and healthcare and community organizations across New Jersey, the ScreenNJ statewide program aims to implement and expand the reach of evidence-based cancer prevention and screening services, directly address barriers that prevent people from receiving timely cancer screenings, and reduce the cancer burden experienced by New Jerseyans.



Team Expansion

With Rutgers Cancer Institute as New Jersey's only National Cancer Institute (NCI) designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, and as a result of its impact on the state in serving all of New Jersey, the Cancer Institute has been entrusted with a State appropriation to manage and strategically plan for the delivery of the [ScreenNJ](#) program. The ScreenNJ program expanded its cancer focus priorities throughout the state from colorectal and lung cancer screening to also include breast, prostate, melanoma, HPV-related, and hereditary cancer screening, and risk reduction. To support this growth, the ScreenNJ outreach and engagement team, with support from the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence, exponentially expanded from seven to 41 personnel including the addition of a statewide patient navigation team.

The community navigation program is the first of its kind in the nation, partnering with New Jersey Department of Health, New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED), regional health coalitions, federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), and other health service entities around the state addressing cancer screening.

See the full list of Rutgers Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence [leadership and staff](#).



SARAH SCHARF, *Program Director*
THERESA LOFTON, *Staff Assistant*

SCIENCE TO THE SIDEWALK

RUTGERS Cancer Institute of New Jersey
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and reducing the impact of cancer.

El Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence

El Rutgers Cancer Institute de Nueva Jersey, el único centro integral para el cáncer del estado designado por el Instituto Nacional del Cáncer (NCI), es, junto con el RWJ Barnabas Health y el Rutgers School of Public Health, una institución líder en educación sobre la salud, proyectos de investigación y atención oncológica, con especial énfasis en los residentes de Nueva Jersey. Estas instituciones han contribuido a reducir la incidencia del cáncer en la población del estado y siguen haciéndolo.

Sin embargo, los resultados médicos aún continúan siendo desiguales en nuestras comunidades, a menudo debido a factores relacionados con la raza, el origen étnico, la geografía y el nivel social y económico de las personas. Es por eso que, en 2019, se creó el Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence como una asociación formal entre el Rutgers Cancer Institute y el Rutgers School of Public Health. El objetivo de este centro es utilizar el camino para abordar y resolver esas desigualdades en Nueva Jersey.

Misión
Promover un acceso equitativo a los servicios de salud, una mejora en la calidad de la atención médica y mejores resultados en todo el espectro del cáncer (prevención, detección temprana, tratamiento, supervivencia y cuidados paliativos) a través de:

- Investigación
- Educación y capacitación
- Comunidad y participación comunitaria
- Promoción de políticas públicas

Visión
Ser el primer centro del país en lograr una atención equitativa del cáncer, mejorar la calidad de la atención oncológica y reducir la carga del cáncer.

Estamos aquí para los residentes de Nueva Jersey. Conozca más sobre las actividades, investigaciones y recursos del Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence.
[Visite cinj.org/CancerHealthEquity](http://www.cinj.org/CancerHealthEquity)

Dr. Richard Alexander Discusses His Clinical Research on Gastrointestinal (GI) Cancer

the body's own immune system to fight the cancer.

Center Structure

Establish identity, organizational structure, governance, as well as a business plan, to meet the requirements and expectations of a recognized Center of Excellence

Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence

Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey, the state's only National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, together with RWJ Barnabas Health and Rutgers School of Public Health are leaders in health education, research and cancer care, with a primary emphasis on the residents of New Jersey. These efforts have contributed to reducing the state's overall cancer burden, and continue to do so.

However, unequal health outcomes remain in our communities, often linked to race, ethnicity, geography, social and economic status, and other factors. So, in 2019, the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence was established as a formal partnership between the Rutgers Cancer Institute and Rutgers School of Public Health, to lead the way in addressing and resolving these inequalities in New Jersey.

Misión
Advance the achievement of equitable access, improved health care quality, and better outcomes across the cancer continuum—prevention, early detection, treatment, survivorship, and end-of-life care—through:

- Research
- Education and training
- Community outreach and engagement
- Public policy advocacy

Visión
Be the leading center in the nation for achieving cancer health equity, improving the quality of cancer care, and reducing the cancer burden.

We are here for the people of New Jersey. Learn more about the Center's cancer health equity activities, research, and resources.
[Visit cinj.org/CancerHealthEquity](http://www.cinj.org/CancerHealthEquity)

Science to the Sidewalk

Dr. Richard Alexander Discusses His Research on Skin Cancer Prevention and Treatment

Dr. Richard Alexander Discusses His Clinical Research on Gastrointestinal (GI) Cancer

Dr. Andrew Evans Discusses His Research on Lymphoma

Dr. Chang Chen Discusses His Research on Cancer Genetics and Mutations

Dr. Howard Hochler Discusses Clinical Cancer, Gastrointestinal (GI) Oncology, and Otolaryngology

Dr. Anita Krieger Discusses Her Research on Cancer Health Equity at Rutgers Cancer Institute

Dr. Shihua Chen Discusses Molecular DNA Repair Mechanisms & DNA Repair Cancer Research

CANCER HEALTH EQUITY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE: PILLARS OF SUCCESS

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New Communications and Marketing Materials

The Center created communication tools to support its concerted effort to expand our visibility and increase awareness within the community, enhancing the effectiveness of outreach to new networks and communities in need—including the first annual [Impact Report](#); a fact sheet about the Center in both [English](#) and [Spanish](#); 45 educational videos in the [Science to Sidewalk](#) series; and the [Pillars of Success](#) video project, an informed overview of activities for each pillar of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence.

Impact Report 2020

Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence Community Outreach and Engagement

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Community Outreach and Engagement

AIM 1

Assess and monitor the catchment cancer burden and cancer-relevant needs to guide outreach and scientific inquiry

Locations that Carry the Cancer Burden in NJ
On average, New Jersey has a higher cancer incidence than the United States rate, and a slightly lower mortality rate. A closer look at the maps shown here reveals the range across counties, with significantly higher incidence and mortality rates in southern and northwestern counties and in the most urban areas of the state.

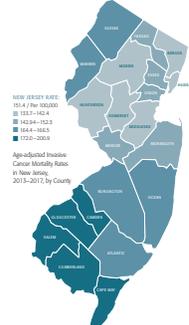
These maps show a pattern similar to the areas of the most worrisome socially determined risk factors like poverty and access to health care and highest rates of behavioral risk factors like smoking. Our Community Outreach and Engagement team cross-references this information when determining the priority areas around the state.

* A cancer incidence rate is the number of new cancers of a specific site type occurring in a specified population during a year, usually expressed as the number of cancers per 100,000 population at risk. That is: Incidence rate = (New cancers / Population) × 100,000
** A cancer mortality rate is the number of deaths, with cause as the underlying cause of death, occurring in a specified population during a year. Cancer mortality is usually expressed as the number of deaths due to cancer per 100,000 population. That is: Mortality Rate = (Cancer Deaths / Population) × 100,000
Source: SEER Program and CDC NCI/CES, U.S. Cancer Statistics: <https://data.cancer.gov/cancerstats/incidenceandmortality>

New Jersey has the 5th highest incidence rate* among the 50 States
Incidence: 480.6 / 100,000
NJ: 480.6 / US: 424.8
53,340 estimated cases in 2020



New Jersey has the 34th highest mortality rate among the 50 States**
Mortality: 145.7 / 100,000
NJ: 145.7 / US: 152.6
15,710 estimated deaths in 2020



Bi-directional Communication Highlight

Through engaging two-way discussions between Rutgers Cancer Institute leadership and the Community Cancer Action Board (CCAB) regarding the Institute's upcoming 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, the CCAB's valuable insight and input led to the Cancer Institute updating its mission and vision including vital input from the community.



Our diverse community brings multiple perspectives and experiences that benefit everyone.

Research



The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence fosters interdisciplinary and community-engaged research addressing cancer health equity in populations suffering disproportionate cancer burdens—particularly underserved and minority populations.



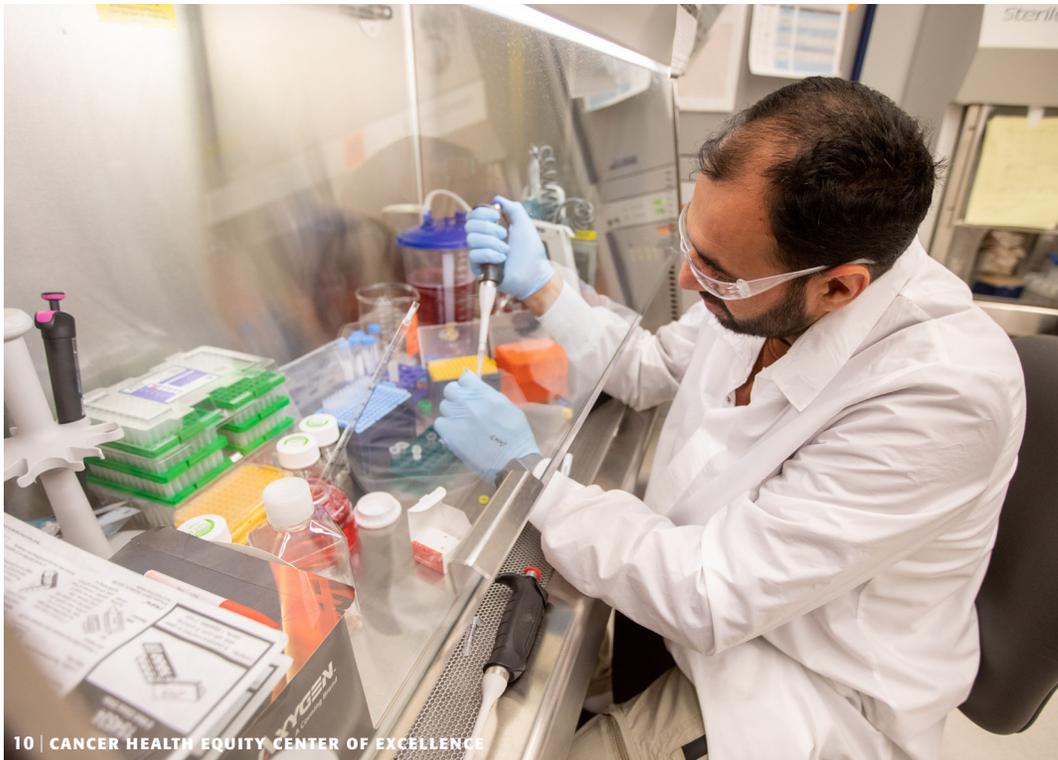
Outreach and research priorities are guided by catchment area assessments and ongoing surveillance. They are informed by ongoing, bi-directional dialogue with New Jersey communities through a variety of mechanisms—including town halls, events, meetings, focus groups, the Community Cancer Action Board (CCAB), Community Science Cafés, and analysis of data (for example, epidemiologic, socioecological, geospatial, community health needs assessments, and health insurance claims).



Key Activities and Impact

New Resource: The STRIDE Platform, launched December 2021

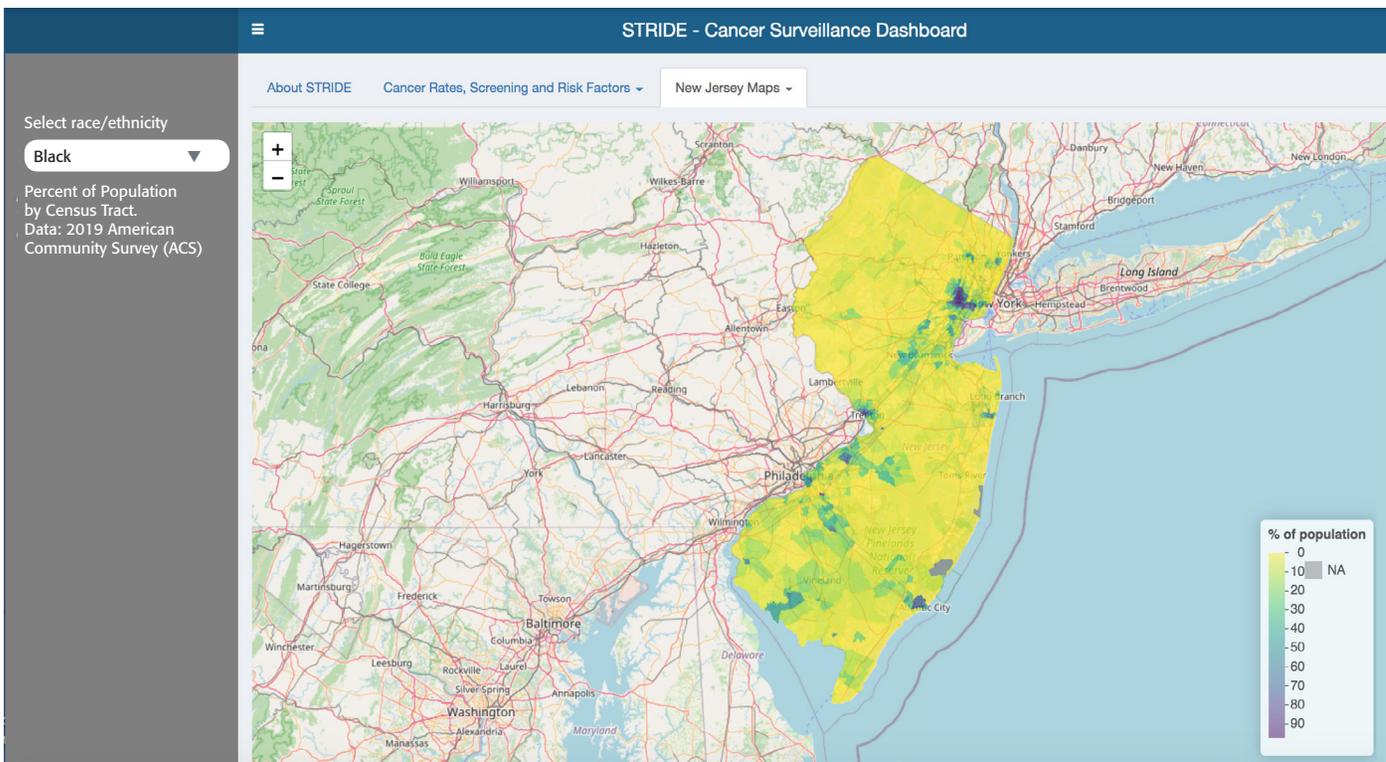
[Surveillance, Tracking and Reporting through Informed Data Collection and Engagement \(STRIDE\)](#) is an interactive data and visualization dashboard created by the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence to support its robust research activities. STRIDE gives researchers and others immediate access to current data and visualizations of New Jersey and disease statistics. It includes clinical trials enrollment, bio-specimen inventory, tumor registry analytic cases, and catchment area information related to cancer burden, behavioral and environmental risk factors, and demographics. Online access includes a password-protected portal for researchers, and a community-facing section of publicly available data. [Learn more about community research activities.](#)



“Works in Progress” Meetings: An Exchange of Knowledge and Ideas

These meetings, which the Center helps coordinate, are a vital forum where scientists can talk about their research ideas, designs, and results and get feedback in an informal, comfortable setting. In 2021, the following meetings enabled researchers to gather input that aided in federal funding submissions.

- **Charles Senteio, PhD, MSW, MBA**, Rutgers University, Associate Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, Rutgers School of Communication and Information—*Developing a Treatment Decision Aid for Black Prostate Cancer Patients to Enhance Patient-Clinician Interaction*. K01 Resubmission, March 2021
- **Raquel “Kelly” Kohler, PhD, MSPH**, Rutgers University, Assistant Professor, Department of Health Behavior, Society and Policy, Rutgers School of Public Health; Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey—*Community-based HPV Screening in Botswana Increasing Triage, Screening and Outreach with Self-HPV (ITSOS) in Botswana*. R01 Submission, May 2021
- **Jaya Satagopan, PhD**, Rutgers University, Professor and Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Rutgers School of Public Health; Director, Center for South Asian Quantitative Health and Education—*Breast Cancer Risk Distribution in South Asian Americans—Estimation and Implications for Disease Prevention*. R21 Resubmission, planned for 2022
- **Raquel “Kelly” Kohler, PhD, MSPH**—*Increasing Triage, Screening, and Outreach with SELF-HPV (ITSOSE) in Botswana*. R01 Resubmission planned for 2022



STRIDE gives researchers and others immediate access to current data and visualizations of New Jersey and disease statistics. It includes clinical trials enrollment, bio-specimen inventory, tumor registry analytic cases, and catchment area information related to cancer burden, behavioral and environmental risk factors, and demographics.

STRIDE Dashboard

Interactive Dashboard Includes:

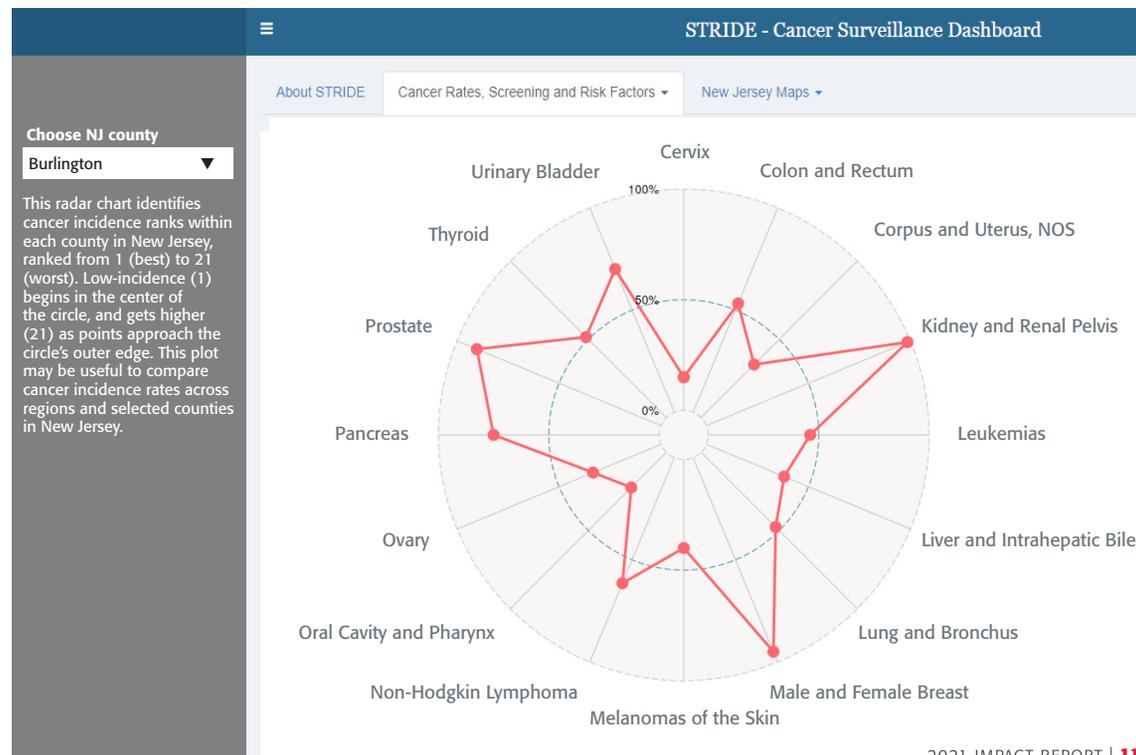
- Clinical trials enrollment data
- Tumor registry data
- Behavior and environmental risk factors
- Incidence and mortality maps
- Preventive screening rates
- Socioeconomic and demographic data
- Internal and community-facing versions

For Researchers:

- Match open Rutgers Cancer Institute trials to affiliate sites
- Data for academic and clinical research

For Community Users:

- Central hub for publicly available cancer data





**Spotlight
Principal Investigator**

Denalee O'Malley, PhD
**“Optimizing Colorectal Cancer Screening
Among Patients with Diabetes
in Safety-Net Primary Care Settings:
Targeting Implementation Approaches”**

Supported by \$400,000 in funding from a National Cancer Institute Pathway to Independence Award (K99CA256043-01) and a Robert Leet Patterson and Clara Guthrie Patterson Trust Mentored Research Award, this 2021–2023 research study will explore barriers affecting colorectal cancer preventative screening in patients with elevated medical and social risks. Based on the findings, an intervention will test improvement strategies to increase colorectal cancer screening uptake among patients with diabetes served by federally qualified health centers, which in New Jersey and nationally primarily serve disadvantaged communities.

In 2021, Rutgers Cancer Institute awarded just over \$500,000 to 11 research projects addressing cancer health disparities. [See the full list.](#)

Disparities-Focused Grants

Members of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence are engaged in important, ongoing cancer health disparities research. In 2021, 11 member investigators were awarded cancer health disparities-focused grants totaling more than \$500,000 supporting projects ranging from triple-negative breast cancer disparities to supportive care and the patient/caregiver dyad.

Disparities-Focused Publications

Members of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence are engaged in important ongoing research studying the causes and impacts of cancer health disparities. In 2021, the findings of 61 of our investigators were published in cancer health disparities-focused publications.



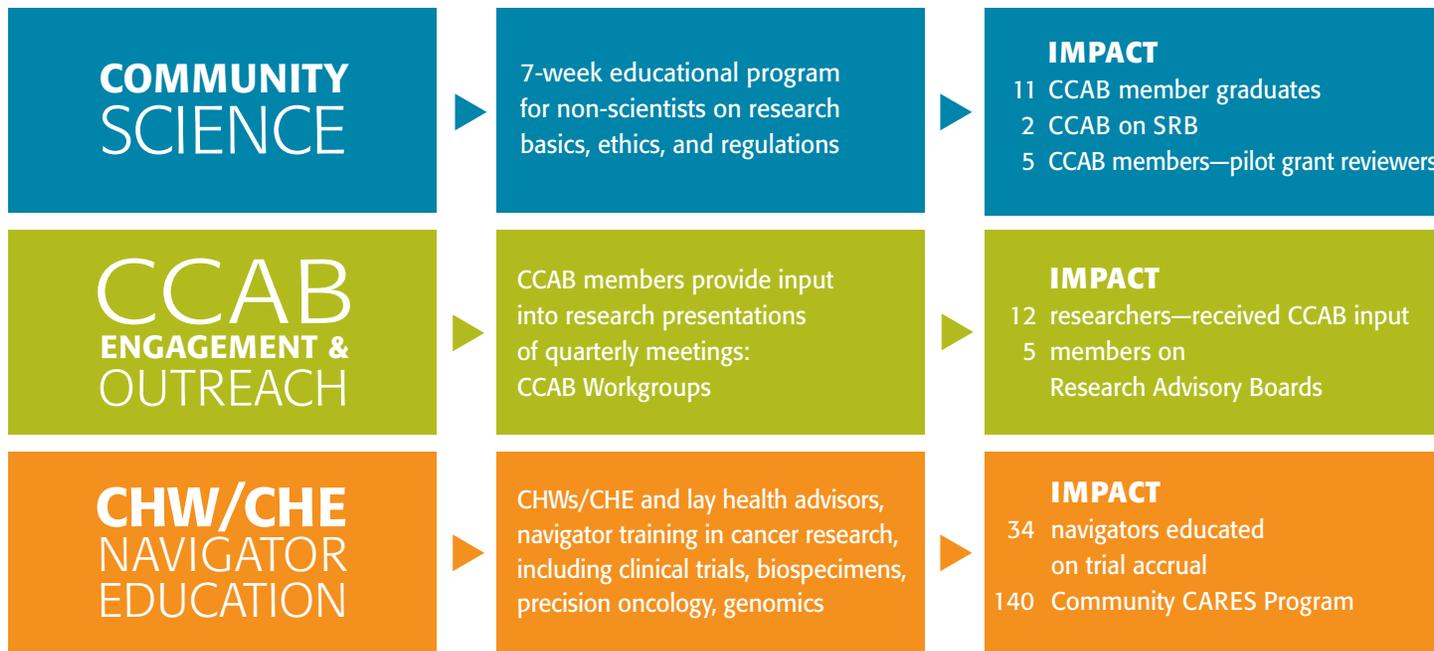
**Bi-directional
Communication
Highlight**

Emphasizing bi-directional community engagement, the Community Cancer Action Board (CCAB) advises Rutgers Cancer Institute on how to advance its mission; helps identify research and outreach priorities; provides guidance on the implementation and evaluation of research and outreach activities; and communicates the successes of Rutgers Cancer Institute and its community partners to external stakeholders throughout the state and beyond. The CCAB also helps enhance community capacity, by linking Rutgers Cancer Institute researchers and staff with community partners. In addition, its members also provide input to develop funding opportunities and serve as reviewers of pilot grants and peer-reviewed research applications.





Examples of Bi-directional Community Engagement and Cancer Research



Community Scientists

This trained group of community members provided input to Rutgers Cancer Institute researchers' project proposals. Twelve community members participated as reviewers of cancer health equity pilot grant applications.



Science Cafés

Introduced in fall of 2021, Science Cafés provide a stimulating opportunity for informative and results-oriented, two-way communication between researchers and community members. During these events, researchers and community members discuss and brainstorm ways to increase the relevance of research studies, improve recruitment strategies to maximize inclusion and diversity, and bring research results to the community in effective ways.

Class of Fall 2021 Community Scientists



Mi-Hyeon Jang, PhD Accelerated Brain Aging in Chemobrain

TWO-WAY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT:

- Conversations with the community about effects of chemotherapy on the brain
- Incorporating feedback on how to further deliver and emphasize information
- Most participants (95%) expressed desire to participate in future Science Café programs

Jaya Satagopan, PhD South Asian Breast Cancer Survivorship Cohort Study

TWO-WAY ENGAGEMENT AND IMPACT:

- Exploring suggested strategies of aligning community recruitment and research staff with study populations to maintain consistency



Education & Training



The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence strengthens the knowledge and skills of professionals and volunteers trained in promoting cancer health equity—spanning post-secondary students to faculty and community-based public health practitioners.

Key Activities and Impact

ECHOs to Professionals

Project ECHO® (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes) is an innovative tele-mentoring program designed to create virtual communities of learners by bringing together healthcare professionals and subject matter experts. Using videoconference technology, brief lecture presentations, and case-based learning, it fosters a bi-directional “all learn, all teach” approach between experts and peers. Project ECHO has been recognized globally as a successful approach to improve patient care outcomes.

Leveraging the Project ECHO model’s knowledge-sharing strategy, Rutgers Cancer Institute was designated an ECHO Hub in May of 2021.



Four Principles of THE ECHO MODEL



Use
technology to
leverage scarce
resources



Share
“best practices”
to reduce
disparities



Apply
case-based
learning
to master
complexity



**Evaluate
& monitor**
outcomes



ECHOs to Professionals *(continued)*

The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence initiated two ECHO programs in 2021, and three ECHO programs were completed:

- **NOYOLLO ECHO**—the first Spanish-language cancer prevention/screening Project ECHO program for Community Health Workers, Promotoras, and Domestic Workers in the U.S.
- **North Jersey Health Collaborative Project ECHO**—which engages caregivers of people with intellectual/physical disabilities to increase health promotion for their patients including access to cancer screenings
- **NJCEED ECHO**—which brings together CDC-funded New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection Screening Program (NJCEED) staff to improve their knowledge and practice around cancer prevention/screening topics and navigation of CEED-eligible patients through cancer screenings, timely diagnosis, and treatment



The ten-session [Promotora Serie de Educación](#) is the first ECHO program delivered to Promotoras (health workers) and domestic workers in Spanish. The graduates of this first ECHO series now take cancer prevention and screening information to their communities and peers and amplify our message.

[Learn more about Project ECHO.](#)

Retreat for Researchers and Community Members

Held on June 17, 2021, the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence organized and ran a four-hour cancer health equity retreat to facilitate collaborations between researchers and community members within our New Jersey catchment area. It included an update on the Center's activities; six flash talks focused on lung cancer health disparities and stress, epigenetics, and tumor biology; and the sharing of 15 abstracts. **Robert Winn, MD**, Director of VCU Massey Cancer Center, delivered a powerful and inspiring talk on cancer health disparities. **Tiffany Wallace, PhD**, Program Director from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities, discussed NCI health disparities priorities from basic science to population science.

Postdoctoral Fellows

Interns



Carolina Sanchez Diaz



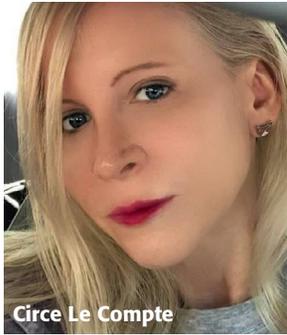
Steffanie Haripersaud



Saber Amin



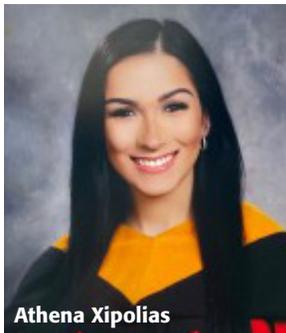
Komel Sajjad



Circe Le Compte



Ashali Kumar



Athena Xipolias

Distinguished Lecturer Series

The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence hosted six speakers in 2021:

- **Christine Ambrosone, PhD**—Senior Vice President for Population Sciences, Roswell Park Alliance Foundation Endowed Chair in Cancer Prevention, Chair of the Department of Cancer Prevention and Control, and Professor of Oncology with Distinction at Roswell Park Cancer Institute
Harnessing Molecular and Epidemiologic Research to Elucidate the Etiology of Aggressive Breast Cancer in Black Women
- **Rick Kittles, PhD**—Associate Director of Health Equities for City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center and Professor and Director of the Division of Health Equities within City of Hope's Department of Population Sciences
Leveraging Genetic Ancestry to Study Health Disparities
- **Peter Guarnaccia, PhD**—Professor and Medical Anthropologist in the Department of Human Ecology at Rutgers University's School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
Cultural Issues in Assessing Quality of Life in Cancer Research
- **Vish Vishwanath, PhD**—Lee Kum Kee Professor of Health Communication, Director of Harvard Chan India Research Centre, Director of Harvard Chan/DFCI Center for Translational Communication Science, and Co-Director of Lee Kum Sheung Center for Health and Happiness
Measuring What Matters: Data Absenteeism, Cancer Communication and Equity
- **Steven R. Patierno, PhD**—Deputy Director of Duke Cancer Institute, Professor of Medicine, Professor of Pharmacology and Cancer Biology, and Professor of Family Medicine and Community Health at Duke University Medical Center
Towards Achieving Cancer Health Equity: Cancer Disparities and Precision Oncology Research Across the Cancer Continuum
- **Kathryn E. Weaver, PhD**—Professor in the Department of Social Sciences and Health Policy and Professor of Implementation Science at Wake Forest School of Medicine
Enhancing Cancer Care Delivery and Health Equity through Implementation Science

Cancer Health Equity Interns

- **Steffanie Haripersaud**, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, contributed to development of the *Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey: Cancer Screening Directory*, used to build referral-screening site networks in medically underserved areas of South Jersey
- **Komel Sajjad**, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, assisted in program coordination for cancer survivorship YMCA exercise and survivorship care programs
- **Ashali Kumar**, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, assisted in LGBTQ staff competency training for a New Jersey nonprofit, including measuring knowledge and perceptions for use in designing future programming
- **Athena Xipolias**, Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, participated in curriculum development for outreach programming

Cancer Health Equity Postdoctoral Fellows

- **Carolina Sanchez Diaz, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow in cancer epidemiology and health outcomes working with Elisa V. Bandera, MD, PhD
- **Saber Amin, MD, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow in cancer epidemiology and health outcomes working with Elisa V. Bandera, MD, PhD
- **Circe Le Compte, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow in cancer health equity working with Anita Kinney, PhD, RN, FAAN, FABMR

“Enrolling in and graduating from this program has made me more informed, empowered, and excited to play a small role in helping my community as a patient navigator and advocate.”

**Walee Jackson,
Plainfield, NJ
Community Scientist**



Bi-directional Communication Highlight

A New Weapon in the Fight Against Cancer: Community Scientists

In 2020, the Rutgers Cancer Institute's **Community Outreach and Engagement team** and its **Community Cancer Action Board** joined together to launch the **Community Scientist Certification Program**, which enables scientists and members of the public to unite towards a common goal: making advancements in cancer research.

Through Rutgers University's learning management system, participants progress through nine weeks of video training modules focused on topics relating to ethics, the research process, research designs, cultural competency, and cancer 101.

The second cohort—which took place from November 17, 2021 through January 19, 2022—saw eight individuals graduate from the program and receive their certification, bringing the total number of Community Scientist graduates to 19.

These Rutgers Cancer Institute-certified Community Scientists can now actively participate in research proposal reviews, research advisory committees, and scientific review boards, and are positioned to be further mentored to sit on institutional review boards.

[Learn more about the Community Scientists program.](#)



Community Outreach & Engagement



The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence supports a dedicated Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) team that promotes community participation and bi-directional engagement in the design and implementation of Center-driven education, research, and dissemination of evidence-based cancer prevention and control guidelines and policies.



Key Activities and Impact

Removing Barriers to Cancer Care and Screening

Our catchment area is the state of New Jersey. Ninety-seven percent of the Rutgers Cancer Institute's patients reside in the state; and research and outreach activities span the whole state.

To better meet the needs of New Jersey residents who face barriers to receiving cancer services, Rutgers Health and RWJBarnabas Health have developed a robust community practice model that includes more than 30 oncology practice sites that provide services to pediatric and adult patient populations.

The Community Outreach and Engagement team also continuously monitors cancer-related indicators such as risk factors, screening and vaccine uptake, outcomes, and receipt of risk-appropriate care by key sociodemographic and geographic factors and for trends over time.

Our Community Outreach and Engagement work has contributed to increased cancer screening rates, including for colorectal and lung cancers. For example, the New Jersey lung cancer screening rate in 2021 was 3.7%, and the national rate was 5.8% (State of Lung Cancer, American Lung Association).

ScreenNJ PARTNERS 2018–2022

Between FY 2018 and FY 2022 there has been:

- an increase in partners who are improving awareness, prevention, screening and timely diagnosis/treatment
- an increase in participating sites
- an increase in statewide reach



Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) and ScreenNJ Educate Our Communities

More than 190 partners across NJ

Partnership Building ■ 991 introductory, community engagement, and planning meetings
 ■ Connected with libraries, schools, and safety networks, as well as government, public health, faith-based, academic, and other established community organizations

Reach ■ 1,913 community educational events
 ■ 257 professional educational events

Impact ■ 30,347 community participants
 ■ 3,261 professional participants
 ■ Shaping community policy, COVID-19 response through contributions in community-based meetings



Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) and ScreenNJ Impact: Cancer Screening & Prevention

Screening and Prevention Services	New Jerseyans Served
Colorectal cancer screenings	16,906
Lung cancer screenings completed	2,015
Tobacco cessation counseling provided to patients	12,637

Community Outreach and Engagement and ScreenNJ

Educational Impact: Number of Attendees



Public Education

2021 Goal:	5,000
2021 Result:	30,347



Provider Education

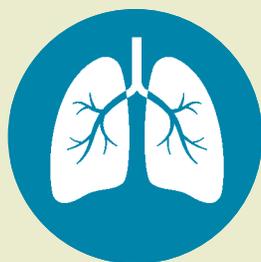
2021 Goal:	1,350
2021 Result:	3,261

Educational Impact: Number of Screenings



Colorectal Screening

2021 Goal:	2,000
2021 Result:	16,906



Lung Screening

2021 Goal:	300
2021 Result:	2,015

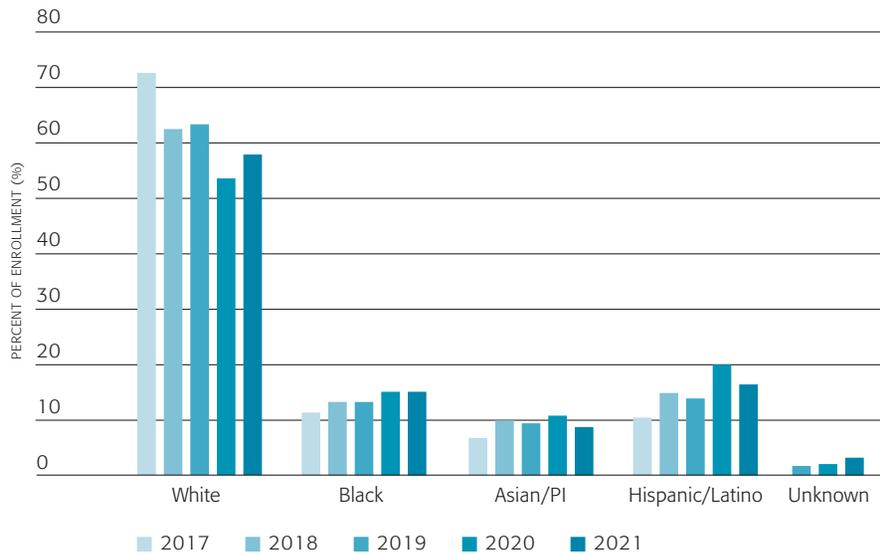


Clinical Trials Enrollment

The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence provides support to ensure clinical trial accruals mirror the New Jersey population. A Rutgers Cancer Institute priority is to have representative participation in clinical research regarding ethnicity, race, gender, and lifespan. Minority representation in clinical trials and access to precision oncology initiatives and treatments are Community Cancer Action Board-identified top priorities. This underscores the Center's impactful work with Rutgers Cancer Institute and the Community Cancer Action Board.

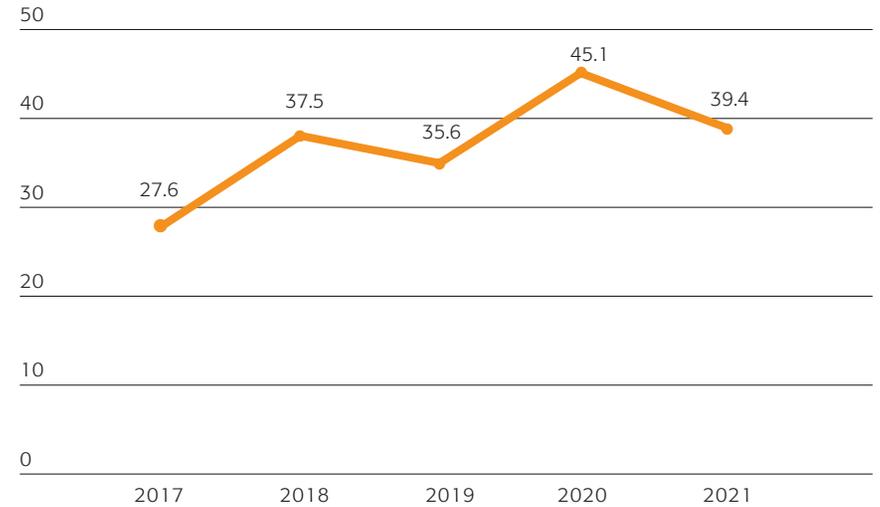
Interventional Therapeutic Trials at CINJ (2017–2021)

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity



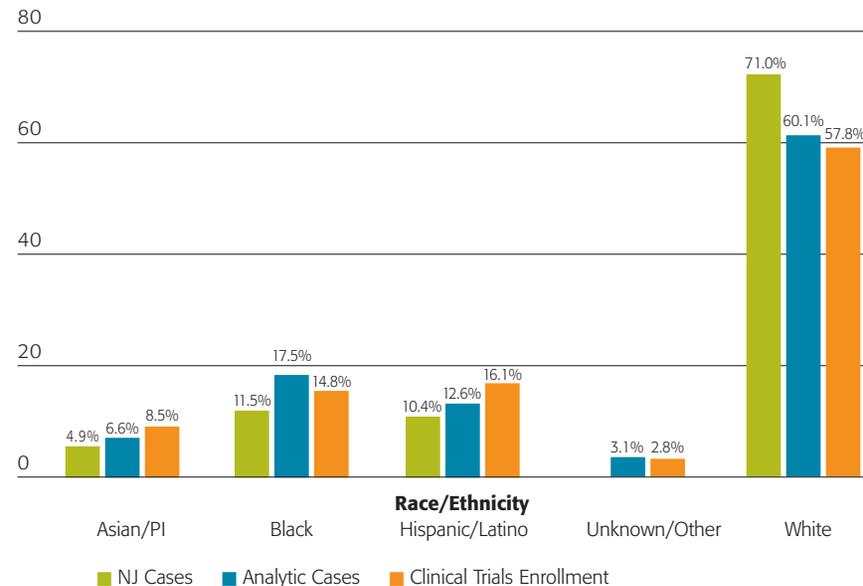
Minority Enrollment Growth Over Time (2017–2021)

As Percent of Therapeutic Trials Enrollment



Percent of Patients Enrolled in Therapeutic Trials

Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey and Affiliate Sites by Race/Ethnicity (2021)



Data: OnCore and RWJBH Tumor Registries | ***Analytic Cases reflect 2021 data

Minority representation in clinical trials and access to precision oncology initiatives and treatments are Community Cancer Action Board-identified top priorities.

Bi-directional Communication Highlight

CCAB Meetings Explore Breast Cancer Care of Black Women and Biorepository/Biobanking Consent

Two Community Cancer Action Board (CCAB) meetings in 2021 brought researchers and cancer health equity thought leaders together to share vital information and insights.



BREAST CANCER CARE



Mridula George



Coral Omene



Bonnie M. Jerome-D'Emilia

IN FEBRUARY, Mridula George, MD

shared her project “The GLORIA Study: A Phase 3, Randomized, Open-Label Study of the Anti-Globo H Vaccine Adagloxad Simolenin (OBI-822)/OBI-821 in the Adjuvant Treatment of Patients with High-Risk, Early-Stage Globo H-Positive Triple Negative Breast Cancer.”

Coral Omene, MD, PhD shared her project “Validation Trial of Taxane Therapy (Docetaxel or Weekly Paclitaxel) and Risk of Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy in Black Women.” And **Bonnie M. Jerome-D'Emilia, PhD, MPH, RN** shared her work on “Breast Cancer Screening in Black Women.”

Two-way engagement and impact:

- A panel discussion with each researcher sharing their area of research, followed by discussion of the care of Black women with breast cancer
- Networking and awareness-raising of the issues related to the breast cancer care of Black women, among the participating researchers as well as CCAB members who will share this information with their communities

IN MAY, **Eric Singer, MD, Adam Berger, MD, FACS,** and **Hatem Sabaawy, MD, PhD** shared information about perspectives on biorepository/biobanking consent. **Anita Kinney, PhD, RN, FAAN, FABMR** shared information in *Biobanking and Genetic Responses to the Catchment Survey and Moderator of Biobanking Panel*.

Two-way engagement and impact:

- Information sharing related to the Catchment Area Survey component that dealt with biobanking and genetics and questions/input from the community
- Hereditary cancer identified as a priority for state, and biobanking information shared.



Eric Singer



Adam Berger



Hatem Sabaawy



Anita Kinney

Policy



The Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence is a resource to help support efforts that influence local, state, and national policy rooted in evidence-based guidelines and strategies to achieve cancer health equity.



Key Activities and Impact

Enhancing Cancer Screening Rates

In 2021, the Center's Community Outreach and Engagement team collaborated with the Rutgers Center for State Health Policy to analyze cancer screening among New Jersey Medicaid recipients, and to produce a policy report—[*Trends in Cancer Screening Among Medicaid Enrollees in NJ: 2011–2017*](#)—that was distributed to researchers, the public, healthcare providers, and State agencies. Findings indicated that cancer screening rates in New Jersey are lowest for Medicaid recipients but that there is wide geographic variation in these disparities. This reinforced the importance and the Community Outreach and Engagement team efforts to forge and strengthen partnerships with Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) and New Jersey Cancer Education and Early Detection (NJCEED) agencies.

In November 2021, the American Cancer Society Future of Cancer Care Forum held a program diving into how we advance health equity from a research, innovation, and care delivery perspective. Anita Kinney, PhD, RN, FAAN, FABMR, Director of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence, spoke on a panel as a national industry and health care leader.



*Speakers in the Future of Cancer Care Forum, clockwise from top left: **Cardinale B. Smith, MD, PhD**, Mount Sinai Health Systems; **Francesca M. Gany, MD, MS**, Memorial Sloan Kettering; **Anita Kinney, PhD, RN, FAAN, FABMR**, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; and **Elisa Rodriguez, PhD, MS**, Roswell Park*



CANCER SCREENING IMPACT

At the State Level: The New Jersey Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan, developed by Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence leadership and members in partnership with the New Jersey Department of Health and community stakeholders across the state

At the National Level: Presentation at the ACS Cancer Action Network on cancer policy by Dr. Anita Kinney



Bi-directional Communication Highlight

Increasing Access to Lung Cancer Screenings

In 2021, ScreenNJ and its partner Inspira Health began a pilot to implement specific process improvements including patient navigation (system-wide) and provider education (with five provider sites) to increase lung cancer screening rates.

The team held educational sessions for healthcare professionals focused on the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force's expanded lung cancer screening guidelines, referral processes for the Inspira–ScreenNJ lung cancer screening program and patient navigator, and referral processes for the Inspira Quit Center for tobacco and smoking cessation.

Two-way engagement and impact

With funding from American Cancer Society, Truth, and the New Jersey Department of Health, under the leadership of Christine Delnevo, PhD and Kevin Schroth, JD at Rutgers Center for Tobacco Studies, the RU Tobacco-Free by '23 initiative was undertaken to change the tobacco use policy at Rutgers. The policy change movement used multiple strategies, engaged students as advocates, and engaged Rutgers leadership as stakeholders, including members of the Rutgers University Senate.

Learn more at ipo.rutgers.edu/tobaccofreeby23

From left: **Kevin Schroth, JD**, Associate Professor, Rutgers School of Public Health; **Cristine Delnevo, PhD, MPH, FAAHB**, Director of Rutgers Center for Tobacco Studies and Professor, Rutgers School of Public Health; **Mahnaz Fatahzadeh, DMD, MSD**, Professor at the Department of Diagnostics Sciences; **Michael Steinberg, MD MPH**, Medical Director of the Rutgers Center For Tobacco Studies and Professor/Chief of Internal Medicine at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



A Comprehensive Roadmap

The Governor’s Task Force on Cancer Prevention, Early Detection and Treatment in New Jersey (“Task Force”) was established in 2006 to reduce cancer incidence and improve outcomes among New Jersey residents, with a special focus on disparately impacted populations.

The Task Force is comprised of the Commissioner of Health, and no more than 20 members representing community public health, academia, treatment, education, research, industry, and cancer survivors. It is charged with the development of the *New Jersey Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan* (“Plan”), a five-year roadmap to reducing the burden of cancer on New Jersey residents and improving the quality of life for cancer survivors.

The Task Force continued to develop the fourth edition (2020–2025) of the Plan utilizing best practices and a collaborative approach of bringing partners together to develop key objectives and strategic actions representing seven workgroups (Breast, Cervical, Colorectal, Lung, Melanoma, Oral, and Prostate); and developed objectives and strategic actions for the priority areas. The development of the plan included New Jersey Department of Health staff and members from the Rutgers Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence and was chaired by Anita Kinney.

New Jersey’s Plan utilizes the Center for Disease Control’s National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program Priorities to frame the work with objectives and strategic actions in the following areas: Primary Prevention; Early Detection and Treatment, and Survivorship; with cross-cutting priorities of Health Equity; Policy Systems and Environmental Change; and Surveillance and Evaluation.

Addressing health equity is a major focus of the work. The Plan’s implementation will continue with support from the New Jersey Department of Health and involves strategic collaboration to address the issues facing persons at risk for cancer, cancer patients and their families, and the coordinated efforts of its relevant programs across New Jersey.

The fourth edition of the *New Jersey Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan* utilizes a collaborative approach to develop key objectives and strategic actions representing seven work groups:

- Breast
- Cervical
- Colorectal
- Lung
- Melanoma
- Oral
- Prostate





give.rutgers.edu/cancerhealthequity

Philanthropy accelerates and expands the impact of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence by funding research, programs, and more. If you would like to learn more about making a gift, please contact cinjdevelopment@ruf.rutgers.edu.

A vibrant, low-angle photograph of a diverse group of young adults, likely students, smiling and posing for a selfie. They are wearing casual clothing like hoodies and denim jackets. Some are wearing headphones, and one is making a peace sign. The background is bright and slightly overexposed, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Support the outreach and engagement activities of the Cancer Health Equity Center of Excellence with a tax-deductible contribution.



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