

Cancer Services in Spanish at the Women's Cancer Resource Center

Founded in 1986, the Women's Cancer Resource Center (WCRC) in Oakland, California, is a non-profit community organization that provides information, resources, services, support and advocacy for all women with cancer. The Center has always seen a need to provide services that address the needs of those most disenfranchised by the medical system - women of color, low income women, and LBT community members. WCRC offers a breadth and depth of personalized services, resources and information that support the local community, including information on complementary treatments for cancer.

The Latina Services Program focuses on families whose first language is Spanish. Staff and volunteers facilitate access to responsive and effective services and treatment. Latina Services Program also includes community education programs in Spanish to ensure a greater understanding of a cancer diagnosis and care to Spanish speakers.

WCRC is also part of the Spanish-Speaking Women's Cancer Initiative, a collaboration of five community-based programs, designed to address key barriers to early detection and treatment of women's cancers in a culturally and linguistically competent manner tailored to meet the needs of low-income, Spanish-speaking women in central and eastern Contra Costa County.

Two Latina Health Educators serve women and their families Alameda and Contra Costa County. Molly Bergstrom and Millie Ruiz help patients navigate the healthcare maze and provide support by attending doctor visits and treatments with the patient. Molly is based at the Alameda County Medical Center (formerly Highland Hospital) in Oakland and Millie works from Contra Costa Regional Medical Center in Martinez. Both women produce ten educational forums each on topics ranging from coping with cancer therapies to alternative treatments for cancer.

The program also recognizes the need for group support and every month there are support groups for women with cancer and for friends and families members held at WCRC in Oakland. In addition to the groups there are annual parties - a Celebration of Life and a Christmas Party where the women can get together with their community and enjoy a nice meal and dance the night away. Other events have included Mother's Day celebrations and participatory commemorations of el Día de los Muertos where participants have built an altar together, decorated sugar skulls and created papel picado to honor their departed beloved ones.

The Latina Program and WCRC also reach far beyond the Bay Area of California. Because WCRC has a comprehensive multi-lingual library and on-line access to information they are able to mail out health information nationally and even internationally. If you would like a free health information packet in Spanish on the topic of your choosing please contact Molly Bergstrom at molly@wrc.org or 1-888-421-7900 x 109. Or Millie Ruiz at millie@wrc.org or 1-888-421-7900 x 110. Molly and Millie are also available just to talk or to help you find referrals in your area. For information in English contact Margo Mercedes Rivera-Weiss at margo@wrc.org or 1-888-421-7900 x111. WCRC is also online at <http://www.wrc.org>.