

Changes in the CRGC Regional Surveillance Program

Dr. Paul Mills and Dr. Elena Martinez leaving the CRGC Surveillance Program

The main purpose of establishing the California Cancer Registry (CCR) in 1987 was to monitor cancer incidence, mortality, and survival among residents of California. Trends by tumor type, age, race/ethnicity, geography and other categories are part of the surveillance program that was created as part of the State law creating the CCR. Initially there were 10 Regions designated in the State for data collection and surveillance but only Regions 1/8, 9 and 7/10 had epidemiologists for surveillance work. In 1995 funds were awarded by the Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) to hire and place an epidemiologist in each of the other regions (2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) to work with the local communities regarding cancer concerns and to publish information regarding the burden of disease in their regions. These five regions, along with region 7/10, became the Cancer Registry of Greater California (CRGC) funded by the National Cancer Institute's SEER Program in 2000.

Over time many registry functions were centralized in Sacramento to improve efficiencies and reduce costs. With our current flat budget from the State for five-years and with the SEER program only supporting a 2% increase per year, over the last few months we have had to again centralize many activities. This had implications for our operations as well as our surveillance programs. Starting in May, Danielle Ewing in Sacramento, will be the epidemiologist in Regions 2, 3, and 6, and Dr. John Morgan at Loma Linda University, will be the epidemiologist in regions 4, 5, and 7/10. Dr. Paul Mills in Fresno, and Dr. Elena Martinez in San Diego will no longer be part of the CRGC team. They will be missed.



Dr. Paul Mills, began as the regional epidemiologist in Region 2 (Central Valley) in March 1995. During his tenure, Paul developed a research program that included an evaluation of cancer among Hmong immigrants, a study of ovarian cancer and exposure to pesticides, and an extensive evaluation of cancer risk among farm workers that included a linkage of the United Farm Worker cohort with the CCR. Numerous scientific papers have been published based on his work. He was the lead scientist in investigating the cancer concern in Kettleman City as well as many other communities. Paul worked closely with the California Environmental Public Health Tracking Program and was active in the American Cancer Society at both the local and state level. Currently Paul is a Professor at the University of California San Francisco's School of Medicine in Fresno where he leads research and teaches students. He also has an appointment in the Department of Public Health at the California State University in Fresno. We all thank Paul for his participation in the CCR and the CRGC and for the knowledge he has contributed.



Dr. Elena Martinez, began as the regional epidemiologist in Regions 7 and 10 (San Diego, Imperial, and Orange Counties) in 2012, shortly after moving to the University of California in San Diego, from the Arizona Cancer Center. Elena’s work has focused on disparities in cancer among Latinos and other minorities. During her short time with CRGC she has addressed several cancer concerns and worked collaboratively with other CCR epidemiologists. She will continue to work with CRGC scientists on research studies that focus on disparities particularly for Latinas with breast cancer. Dr. Martinez is a Professor of Internal Medicine and Public Health at the University of California in San Diego where she leads the Reducing Cancer Disparities program of the UCSD Moores Cancer Center. Thanks to Elena for her insights and for being an enthusiastic member of our team.