

Improving Native Cancer Health Outcomes through Community Co-Designed Research



UC DAVIS

A Northern Valley Indian Health and UC Davis Collaboration

Teresa Martens, MSN, RN
Director, NVIH Community Health and Outreach

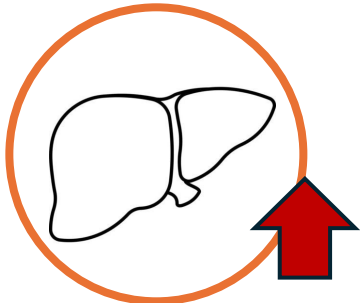
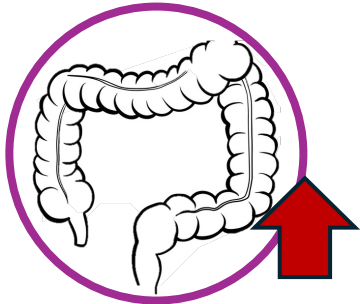
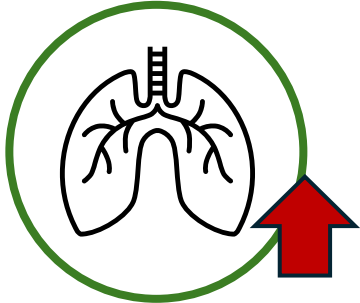
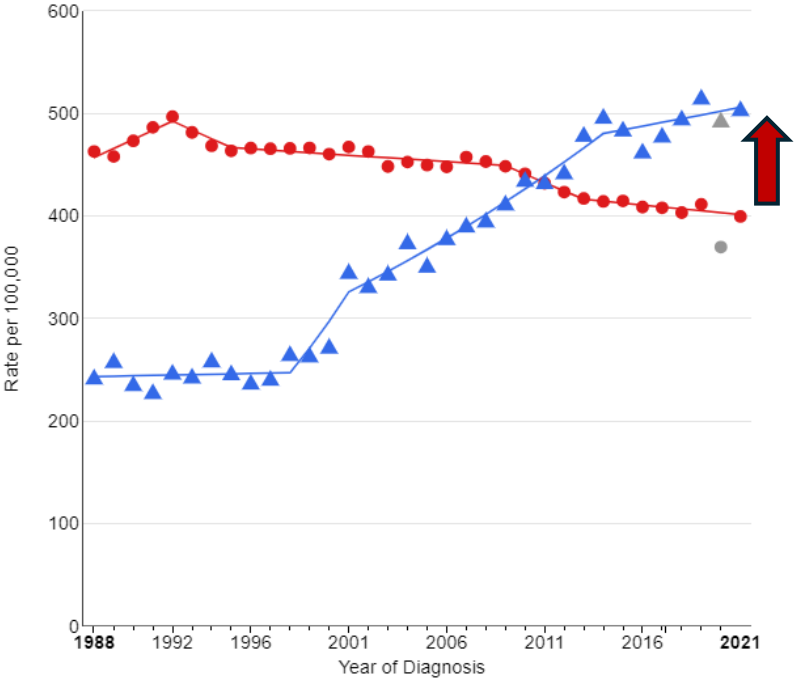
Nicole Halmai, PhD
Cancer Health Researcher, UC Davis

IHS Best Practices Conference
November 4th, 2025

Project Background

Cancer is a significant health problem for American Indians and Alaska Natives living in California

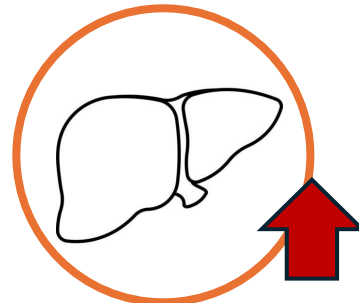
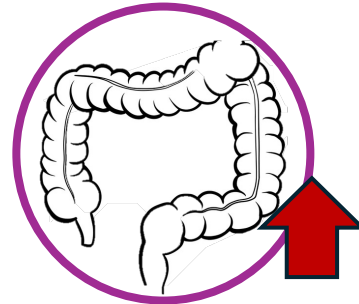
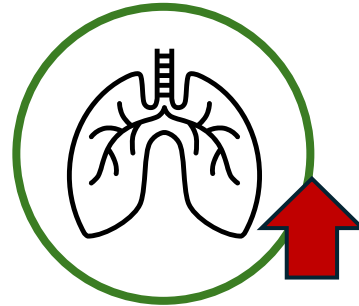
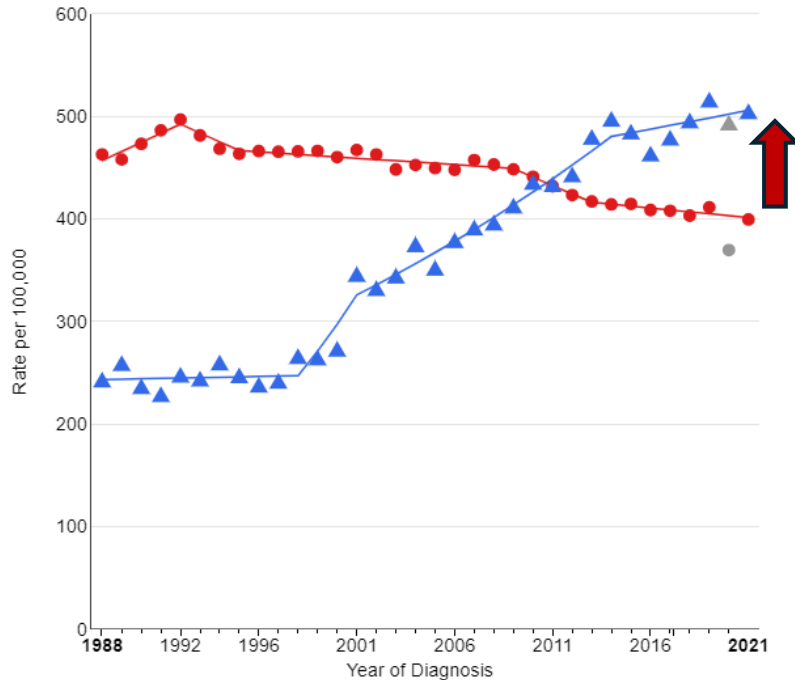
All Cancer Sites Combined
Trends in Incidence Rates, 1988-2021
By Race/Ethnicity, Both Sexes, All Ages, California



Project Background

Cancer is a significant health problem for American Indians and Alaska Natives living in California

All Cancer Sites Combined
Trends in Incidence Rates, 1988-2021
By Race/Ethnicity, Both Sexes, All Ages, California



Additional challenges that perpetuate Native cancer health disparities:

- Less accurate or incomplete cancer surveillance data
- Cancer can be a cultural taboo
- Medical and research community mistrust
- Difficulties in integrating traditional healing and Western medical treatment

A Community Partnership to Address Cancer Health Needs

UC DAVIS
HEALTH

**COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER**



Northern Valley Indian Health
YOUR HEALTH. OUR MISSION.



A Community Partnership to Address Cancer Health Needs

NCI-Designated Comprehensive Cancer Center

- State-of-the-art research
- Cutting-edge cancer treatments

A Community Partnership to Address Cancer Health Needs



Private, nonprofit tribal organization founded in 1971

NVIH Mission: Excellence in healthcare services to Native Americans and all community members

NVIH Values: Compassion, Integrity, Respect, Customer Service, Teamwork

Comprehensive and integrated **medical, dental, behavioral health, women's health, nutrition and community health and outreach** services are provided to over 6,500 American Indians and Alaska Natives who reside in the NVIH five county service area.

Governing Board of Directors of 4 California Tribes:

Mechoopda Indian Tribe of Chico Rancheria

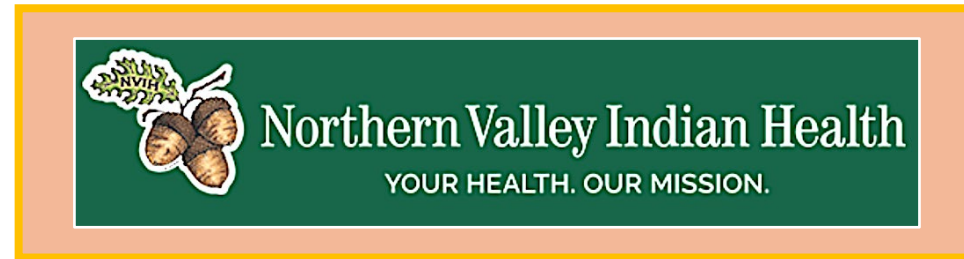
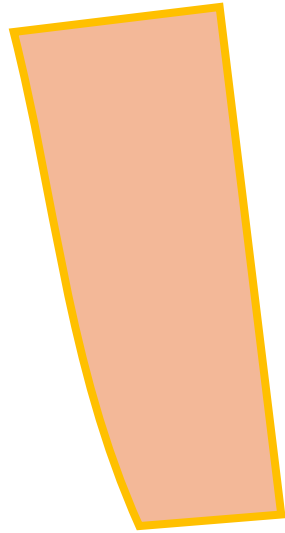
Grindstone Indian Rancheria of Wintun-Wailaki Indians of California

Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation of California

Klettsel Dehe Band of Wintun Indians of California



A Community Partnership to Address Cancer Health Needs



NVIH Community Health and Outreach

NVIH Community Health and Outreach



Northern Valley Indian Health
HEALTH SERIES LUNCHEON

FREE EVENT OPEN TO ALL PATIENTS

Monthly educational luncheon with guest speaker from UC Davis speaking about Cancer Research in Native Communities followed by a craft!

 Community Health & Outreach
Northern Valley Indian Health

 Thursday, July 13th, 2023
11 am - 1 pm

To ensure adequate supplies, reserve your spot by calling 530-207-5483



UC DAVIS HEALTH | COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER




Northern Valley Indian Health Celebrates
Native American Heritage

Learn about Native Cancer Health in California and Make Traditional Medicine

NOVEMBER 04, 2023
10AM-2PM | COLUSA CASINO
3770 CA-45 Colusa, CA, 95932

ABOUT THE SPEAKERS:



Dr. Nicole Halmal (Navajo) is a postdoctoral researcher in the laboratory of Dr. Luis Carvajal-Carmona at the University of California, Davis (UC Davis) Genome Center. She received her PhD in Molecular, Cellular and Integrative Physiology from UC Davis in 2020. As a graduate student, Dr. Halmal was both a NIH-Initiative for Maximizing Student Development and NIH-Molecular and Cellular Biology T32 training fellow. She co-founded the student-led organization ESTEME, which aims to increase diversity in the STEM workforce. Her current research is focused on the development of pre-clinical cancer models and molecular data from underserved racial/ethnic minority populations to advance cancer health equity. As a Native scientist, Dr. Halmal is particularly focused on the collection and application of cancer health data in partnership with Native Tribes and communities in California to support research efforts that are driven by Native health priorities, uphold Tribal sovereignty and promote Tribal capacity building.



Keoma McCaffrey, a Trauma informed Somatic Activated Healer, who teaches Native Plant Medicine as one of the many classes taught on her 10 acre Lavender and Herb Farm in Arbuckle, CA. There she offers classes that focus on teaching others how they can better help themselves from a Beginning Herbalism and Traditional Folk medicine perspective. She is a passionate, life-long herbalist with a focus on keeping herbal medicine alive and OF the people.

AGENDA

Native Cancer Health in California: Towards Health Equity
Nicole Halmal

Community Resources/Native Artist Vendors
Community Members

Cultural Activity: Mugwort Salve/Essential Oils
Keoma McCaffrey

ENJOY VENDORS, FOOD, AND RAFFLES!

FOR INFORMATION AND TO RSVP CALL:
CHICO (530) 899-5156 WILLOWS (530) 934-5431 WOODLAND (530) 207-5483



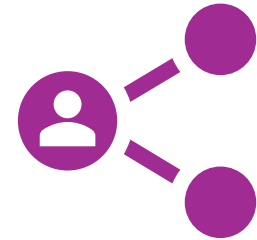
NVIH CH/OR hosts health education, community building, and cultural celebration events for Native patient community



NVIH Native Community Defines Cancer as a Health Problem

Cancer health discussion topics across NVIH's patient community:

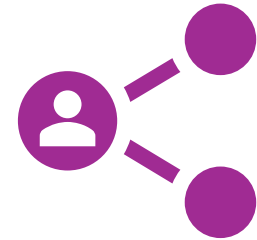
- Increasing community **awareness of cancer trends** among Native community – learning more about what types of cancers are most affecting Native communities



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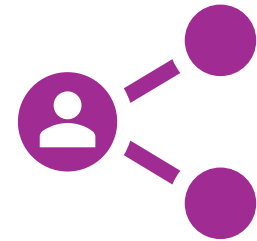
- Increasing community **awareness of cancer trends** among Native community – learning more about what types of cancers are most affecting Native communities
- Promoting **community story-telling** and experience sharing around cancer survivorship and caretaking – normalizing talking about cancer and health to create networks of support



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- Increasing community **awareness of cancer trends** among Native community – learning more about what types of cancers are most affecting Native communities
- Promoting **community story-telling** and experience sharing around cancer survivorship and caretaking – normalizing talking about cancer and health to create networks of support
- Increasing community **education about cancer research** – learning more about what kinds of research is happening for cancer, how they contribute to better cancer care, and how this can help Native communities



NVIH Native Community Defines Cancer as a Health Problem



Cancer health survey among local Native communities (n=28 self-identified Native/Indigenous adults):

- **82%** believe **cancer is a health problem** for their community
- **75%** have **family history of cancer**
- Community **interest in participating in cancer research** through biospecimen donation
- **Greater willingness** to donate a biospecimen for research with knowledge of **how samples will be used** and **who stores them**



Co-Designing a Cancer Health Needs and Research Interest Assessment

Key Takeaways from Community Input:

1. Identify areas of need to improve cancer health and care access among Native community
2. Define Native community-responsive ways of appropriately engaging in cancer research

Co-Designing a Cancer Health Needs and Research Interest Assessment

Native and Indigenous Cancer Health Equity Task Force



Luis
Carvajal-Carmona



Nicole Halmaj



Sophie Barbu



Michelle
Villegas-Fraizer



Arti Parikh-Patel



Teresa Martens



Celena Donahue



Anna Knight

TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify areas of need to improve cancer health and care access among Native community
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Luis Carvajal-Carmona



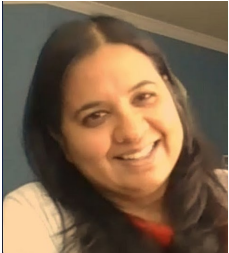
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**Native Community-Tailored
Cancer Health Needs and Research
Interest Assessment**

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Native and Indigenous Cancer Health Equity Task Force



Luis Carvajal-Carmona



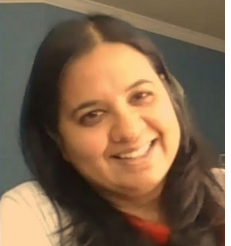
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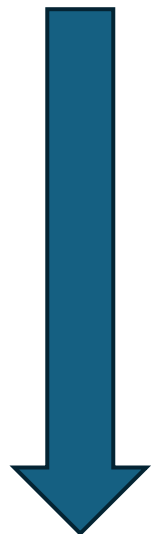
Celena Donahue



Anna Knight

Cancer Health Needs and Research Interest Assessment based on existing assessments :

- NIH NCI population health assessment supplement
- California Health Interview Survey
- Published research interest assessments



Approved by NCI Board of Directors

Reviewed by Task Force members

Reviewed by External Indigenous Research Group (Collaboratory for Indigenous Data Governance)

Reviewed by NCI CH/OR Staff

Native Community-Tailored Cancer Health Needs and Research Interest Assessment

Co-Designing a Cancer Health Needs and Research Interest Assessment

Final Assessment: 52 multiple choice and short answer questions covering cancer-associated risk factors, barriers to care, and research study design factors.

Table 1. Comprehensive cancer health and research interest assessment topics

Cancer Risk Factors	Barriers to Care Access	Research Design Elements
cancer screening adherence	transportation/distance to facilities	community involvement/values
age	caregiver support	personal involvement/values
sex	caregiving duties	community capacity-building
chronic diseases	health literacy	personal safety/privacy
family history of cancer	health knowledge resources	personal benefits/compensation
infections	nutrition security	community safety/privacy
smoking/vaping/tobacco use	housing security	community benefits/compensation
alcohol consumption	insurance	personal data/sample control
diet	employment/finances	community data/sample control
exercise	perceived health	secondary use of data/samples

A Community-University Partnership to Improve Native Cancer Health

Phase I

Community Cancer Health Needs and Research Interests Assessment

Survey

Talking Circles

Data collection led by NCIH CH/OR
100+ surveys in 4 weeks!

Talking circles scheduled for 2026

Phase II

Community Defined Research

Areas of Need in Cancer Health

Research Methods Preferences

Phase III

Community-Partnered Research Projects

A Community-University Partnership to Improve Native Cancer Health

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Community-Partnered Research Projects

Key Takeaways for a Successful Collaboration

Community-defined
areas of interest

Setting the groundwork with the community

Building on the strengths of Tribal health programs

Community-responsive
research design

Integrating community feedback at every step

Centering community health benefits and
capacity building as the major outcomes

Community benefits
from research outcomes

Key Takeaways for a Successful Collaboration

Thank you!

Contact Information

Teresa Martens, MSN, RN
Director, NCIH Community Health and Outreach
teresa.martens@nih.gov

Nicole Halmai, PhD
Cancer Researcher, UC Davis Genome Center
nbcoggins@ucdavis.edu