



LATINAS CONTRA CANCER

DEC 2024

SUMMARY OF IRMA FERRER HEALTH JUSTICE

Fellowship 2024 Cohort

What they accomplished:

The fellowship began with LCC's first Patient Power Retreat: Rights to Heal, where they joined 50 women in reflection and empowerment to prepare for a year full of advocacy. With this preparation, they worked on their projects on Health Education, Defensoras Advocate Training Program, Research and Patient Organizing.

Our fellows trained and graduated the 8th and 9th cohorts for LCC's Defensoras Advocate Training Program, where they empowered community members to become advocates for their community. In addition, they trained our Health Education promotoras on workshop facilitation, and improved LCC's health education curriculum. Half of the fellows were in the Patient Organizing committee, where they built a campaign from the ground up to save the Regional Medical Center in East San Jose, a primarily Latinx and Vietnamese community; and they succeeded! Finally, three of our fellows began training for a federally-funded research study on the state of the social determinants of health in Latinas of the Bay Area, which they will begin in 2025.



PATIENTS OVER PROFIT

AUG 7 | 10:30 AM
GOOD SAMARITAN HOSPITAL
East Entrance

2425 Samaritan Dr, San Jose, CA 95124

Join us at Good Samaritan Hospital to shine a light on how the HCA is making record profits but *still* divests from RMC & the East Side!

In this newsletter:

Read about each fellow, our speakers, and updates for the next cohort!

Watch us in the news!

1. [Telemundo](#) report on the beginning of the cohort
2. San Jose [Spotlight](#) on the planned closure of RMC
3. [Telemundo](#) report on our rallies
4. [KTV](#) report on our rallies

OUTCOMES

COLLECTIVELY +1300 HOURS OF WORK

The goal of the Irma Ferrer Health Justice Fellowship is to empower young Latinx women to pursue careers with a commitment to health equity and social justice. Throughout the fellowship, we engaged their critical thinking and passion for the population we serve. Below is their self-declared outcomes.

Edlimar Delgado SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY '19

"This experience has fundamentally expanded my understanding of healthcare and the broader social justice issues within it. Initially, my focus was on improving the quality of care and protecting patient rights, making sure providers respected those rights. However, the closure of Regional Medical Center (RMC) shifted my perspective entirely. Instead of simply striving to improve the system, we found ourselves fighting to preserve it and prevent the deterioration of services. I had never considered that we might face a scenario where vital healthcare services could be lost altogether, turning our community into a healthcare desert. It was a harsh reality, but one that was forced upon us by corporate interests prioritizing profit over people. This experience reaffirmed the type of social change I want to see in the world: a healthcare system that doesn't just serve but sustains communities. My work with Latinas Contra Cancer in fighting to keep RMC open showed me the power of grassroots organizing to resist corporate control of healthcare, and the importance of bringing communities together to support each other. The battle to save RMC from closure was not just about one hospital—it was about ensuring that East San Jose didn't become another forgotten corner of a broken healthcare system. More importantly, this experience shaped the understanding that we must do away with corporate-run medicine, which treats healthcare as a commodity rather than a basic human right. This struggle has transformed the way I approach health equity, making me even more committed to fighting for a healthcare system that prioritizes people over profits, where everyone has access to the care they deserve..

My vision for social change now includes cultivating patient leadership, organizing for grassroots efforts, and creating a unified front that demands equitable access to care and community-based health services. I see this as a necessary step in ensuring that healthcare is not only accessible but also culturally competent and grounded in the needs of the people. I also believe that the future of healthcare must be rooted in a model that prioritizes people over profits, one that is free from the corporate control that has long dictated how care is delivered."



Milagros Hernandez CSU SAN FRANCISCO '22

"Before the fellowship, my experiences and those of my family opened my eyes to the injustices immigrant communities face daily in the U.S. This awareness motivated me throughout college to engage with organizations like Latinas Contra Cancer, which champion health and social justice. This fellowship truly reminded me of the strength we hold as a community and how we can collectively fight against injustices to create a more equitable healthcare system. One of the most impactful experiences at LCC was rallying to prevent the closure of trauma services at Regional Medical Center (RMC)—the only community hospital in East San Jose, serving primarily low-income and minority patients. Together, we engaged in community organizing by setting up phone banks, going door-to-door, and coordinating town halls, rallies, and events outside RMC to demonstrate our determination to be heard. Our efforts drew so much attention that Santa Clara County has agreed to acquire RMC and will work to restore these essential services. Moving forward, I'm inspired to carry the energy and commitment of this community and organization into my future career. I hope that when I become a doctor, I can be like those physicians who stood with us outside RMC, actively advocating for patients' rights."

Esmeralda Heredia SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY '26

Being a part of this fellowship has truly opened my eyes from the books to the real world. It allowed me to see with my own eyes the vast effects that disparities, ignorance and legislative inequity have on real people...my people. Listening to the testimonies of real cancer patients, their families and the complex and compound factors that worsen their treatment experiences was eyeopening and weighted so heavily in my heart. But knowing that I was now on the side of a team that is so passionately and actively fighting for the equitable rights of the Latino community and their health, not as a esteemed privilege, but as our fundamental human right. Being a part of this organization for the past few months has allowed me the space and power to show up for those in my community through my individual expertise, interests and visions."



Samantha Rojas CSU EAST BAY '25

"Before joining the fellowship, I envisioned making change by engaging in social events to promote this awareness and having 1:1 conversations with community members to bring information that can serve people in need...Some of the barriers I saw in the community while working in the fellowship were very familiar to me, such as the lack health insurance in the Latinx population and the belief that culture/religion are superior than seeking basic medical care. A barrier that I came to realize that survivors face is the absence of daily routines and activities due to their medical treatments, as well as the Spanish translation deficiency during appointments leading to misinformation and lack of empathy to patients/survivors... If I were to compare myself before to who I am today, I would say that I have strengthened my weaknesses and I became the person that I needed when I was younger. Without Latinas Contra Cancer, I would not have gotten the amazing opportunities my university and external programs have given me. I aim to continue my work at Latinas Contra Cancer and save as many lives as possible!"



Sofia Pesantez STANFORD UNIVERSITY '24 AND '25

"This fellowship really reaffirmed my belief that Health Education in the community is the most impactful way that we can empower ourselves to create change in this broken system. I have become very passionate about advocating for importance of preventive screenings in our community, and the importance of regular primary care visits. As a New Yorker, I want to hopefully in the future implement a program such as Defensoras in the New York area, so that I can bring the knowledge that I have as a facilitator to the community that I grew up in. In this fellowship, I was able to create very meaningful relationships with powerful women, not only the participants of Defensoras, but also with Esmeralda and Laisha, who helped me through the process of becoming a facilitator and who engaged with me in meaningful conversations surrounding the Defensoras curriculum, who come from all walks of life. I will be embarking. As I continue on my journey of becoming the first physician in my family, and a Latina physician who will consistently advocate for the rights of her patients, I will take these experiences and stories that I learned throughout the IFHJ Fellowship on every journey I embark on."



Esmeralda Matias STANFORD UNIVERSITY '27

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DEEP GRATITUDE TO OUR 2024 SPEAKERS

The fellowship featured monthly meetings featuring check-ins on projects, plus a Latinx leader in the various health care fields who shared their journey.

Dr. Barbara Gomez, Former Associate Director of Stanford Latino Entrepreneurship Initiative

Karyna Bravo, PA student at Stanford School of Medicine

Fred Ferrer, CEO of Child Advocates of Silicon Valley and Fellowship Founder

Dr. Vicky Gomez, DrPH, Assistant Professor of Public Health @ SJSU

Jessie Garcia, PharmD, Bilingual Health Strategist @ Gilead Sciences

Dr. Felipe Perez, MD, Pediatric Anaesthesiologist and Assistant Dean for Diversity @ Stanford SOM

Dr. Moises Gallegos, MD, Emergency Medicine Physician and Clinical Professor at Stanford SOM

Dr. Seciah Aquino, DrPH, Executive Director of Latinos for a Healthy California



2025 Cohort Application

IS OPEN! DUE FEB 5, 2025 AT 11:59 PST



Visit our website to learn about our alumni and previous speakers

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WWW.LATINASCONTRACANCER.ORG