ADDRESSING CANCER TOGETHER DURING COVID-19:
The ChicagoCHEC Partnership

Join Our Cause through Education, Health Care, and Research

Celebrating 5 years!
The Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC) is a network of researchers, faculty, students, and community members working together to reduce cancer rates and improve health outcomes for those most affected.

We recognize that Chicagoans who live in neighborhoods that are underserved or who are members of racial and ethnic minority groups are more likely to suffer from cancer and less likely to receive the care they need. We want to change that. Our goal is cancer health equity. All Chicagoans should have access to the best available resources to prevent, diagnose, treat, and manage cancer and to live satisfying lives as cancer survivors.

Since the inception of ChicagoCHEC in 2015, we have taken great strides in support of our mission. These successes would not have been possible without the guidance, engagement and continued motivation from our community partners – the true foundation of our work.

As we celebrate 5 years since ChicagoCHEC’s formation, our commitment to design initiatives that expand community engagement, mobilize resources and build capacity remains strong! At the center of our partnership with Chicago’s underserved communities, we continue to seek the guidance of our key community stakeholders in order to fully execute our mission. We aspire to foster and maintain respectful and meaningful collaborations with community partners to make a meaningful and sustainable impact in our communities.

In this 2020 report, we highlight a few of our key accomplishments across the three core areas of ChicagoCHEC: community engagement, meaningful research, and training and education.

We hope that you will join us for the next phase of our work!
SNAPSHOT 2015-2019: ChicagoCHEC Milestones

An overview of community engagement, research, education and training events ChicagoCHEC has been part of from 2015-2019.

2015- Northeastern Illinois University, Northwestern University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago awarded $17.4 million National Cancer Institute U54 collaborative grant to launch the Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC).

2016- 8 ChicagoCHEC Incubator & Catalyst Grants applications received for research partnership development proposals, reviewed by the Community Steering Committee, with 10 new community partners. Launch of the ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program. 1st Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum: Keeping Cancer in CHEC: Bridging Communities through Education, Health Care, and Research with 167 attendees. Published the first edition of the Annual ChicagoCHEC community report. ChicagoCHEC participates in 8 local community events with 610 attendees.


2018- The ChicagoCHEC team assists with the Lung Force Expo and State Rep. Theresa Mah’s 2nd Annual Community Health Fair. Launch of Community “CHEC-ins” conversations series and held the first one with cancer survivors from Women on Top of Their Game Foundation (W.O.T.). 20 students participate in ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program. ChicagoCHEC conducts the 3rd Annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum: Healing Together: From Surviving to Thriving “Our Lives After Cancer” with 150 attendees. ChicagoCHEC participates in 27 local community events with 4,975 attendees.

SNAPSHOT: ChicagoCHEC in 2020

An overview of community engagement, research, education and training events ChicagoCHEC has been part of in 2020.

FEBRUARY 2020 – ChicagoCHEC team recruits and receives over 200 applications for the ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program. A series of interactive Q&A workshops were held to help applicants.


JANUARY 2020 – ChicagoCHEC team submits a funding application to the National Cancer Institute to continue its efforts for 5 more years. ChicagoCHEC hosts an informative talk with Dr. Electra Paskett on “A Multi-Level Model to Address Cervical Cancer Disparities to Appalachia”. ChicagoCHEC participates in NU’s Winter Job & Internship Fair.

MARCH 2020 – ChicagoCHEC Research Project Leads, Dr. Joanna Buscemi and Dr. Betina Yanez, host a presentation on Culturally Adapted eHealth Intervention for Hispanic/Latinx Breast Cancer Patients.


“Time goes fast, and five years ago when I attended the initial announcement of the NIH funding for the collaboration of Chicago institutions to focus on cancer equity, as a clinician and a respected community advocate, this presented an opportunity to serve, watch, participate and keep our leaders, researchers and academia in check—an opportunity as the late great John Lewis stated, was my opportunity for “Good trouble,” meaning, if the community was not at the table, it would be concerning. To fast forward, job well done CHEC.” - Joanne Glenn, ChicagoCHEC CSC Co-Chair and founder of the W.O.T. Foundation, Inc.

“Cancer doesn’t stop during COVID-19,” “It keeps hiding, attacking, growing in our bodies. We have to keep up on cancer health for our mothers, fathers, children, tías, tíos y abuelos and arm ourselves with information and resources that speaks our languages and helps us fight cancer when it strikes.” - Henrietta Barcelo, ChicagoCHEC CSC Co-Chair

“Since its inception I have found the Community Forum has been a valuable tool for educating diverse populations that may not have been served before. It has provided culturally appropriate materials and given the attendees the opportunity to communicate and interact in a safe environment.” - Rosemarie Rogers, ChicagoCHEC CSC Member

“The annual ChicagoCHEC Community Forum is an incredible forum for on-the-ground sharing of those who have or had cancer and those who have been touched by cancer through their families and extended families.” - Carmen Velasquez, ChicagoCHEC CSC member and founder of Alivio Medical Center

“COVID-19 has ravaged our communities and has worsened all types of health inequities but especially those in cancer. This year, our annual Community Forum is going to tackle the intersection of inequities, cancer and COVID-19 in the hopes that we can help lift the needs of our communities and find on-the-ground solutions to respond.” - Melissa Simon, MD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC, George H. Gardner Professor of Clinical Gynecology of the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center at Northwestern University

“The cancer health disparities we see in Chicago stand as a clear call to action. Only by working together and through authentic engagement can we create meaningful change and reduce the unequal share of the cancer burden experienced by our underserved communities.” - Marian Fitzgibbon, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Associate Director of Cancer Prevention and Control at the University of Illinois Cancer Center

“ChicagoCHEC has made great strides in reducing cancer health inequities by creating new educational and research opportunities for students from across the City of Chicago.” - Christina Ciecierski, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Professor of Economics at Northeastern Illinois University

“Only through partnership and engagement with our City’s underserved can we foster meaningful cancer research, education and training that appropriately addresses health equity issues. By serving the most diverse populations of students, NEIU is well-positioned to reach out to these communities and encourage them to actively participate and engage in this partnership.” - Lidia Filus, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Professor and Chair of Mathematics of Northeastern Illinois University

“The work of ChicagoCHEC embodies Angela Davis’ famous quote: ‘I no longer accept the things I can’t change and am changing the things I can’t accept’.” - Joseph Feinglass, PhD, Co-Principal Investigator of ChicagoCHEC and Research Professor of Medicine at Northwestern University
ChicagoCHEC is committed to working alongside communities to identify and address their cancer health needs. This year COVID-19 presented challenges to engage in in-person community gatherings and events, but together, we overcame this and continued our CHEC-in conversations from last year and modified them to meet the needs of the current circumstances.

ChicagoCHEC’s Virtual Community Conversations provide an online platform for community members to speak about COVID-19 and cancer. Working with our Community Steering Committee, we identify topics and community members and invite them to meet with experts to answer questions and have a discussion about how the pandemic has impacted cancer patients. Our goal is to provide a safe space to learn from each other and share experiences with COVID-19 and cancer so that we better understand how, together, we can help improve cancer prevention and care. Below are a few conversations we had this year!

**Conversation on the Impact of COVID-19 on Communities Touched by Cancer:** featuring partnership investigators and staff, its goal was to provide an avenue to share experiences, challenges, and resources related to the COVID outbreak for community members touched by cancer. This conversation was held in both English and Spanish.

**Conversation on Cancer Screening and Care during COVID-19 Pandemic:** featuring Dr. Lauren Green, MD, its goal was to provide a discussion and Q&A session on navigating cancer screening and care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Click here for the recording.

**Conversation on the Current Status of COVID-19: Staying safe in Phase 4 and Beyond:** featuring Dr. Melissa Simon, MD, MPH and Saul Ayala, Communicable Disease Supervisor, Chicago Department of Public Health. Its goal was to discuss with health experts on understanding and transitioning through the phases of COVID-19. Click here for the recording.

**SkinnyTrees: Lifting Health for All Podcast - Special Series: COVID-19 in Chicago Communities.** This spring, we launched a special series on the impact of COVID-19 in Chicago communities where we talked with experts and community members (featuring some of our own Community Steering Committee members and staff) about COVID-19 impacts across our communities. Listen here.
**RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS THROUGHOUT 2015-2020**

We are committed to supporting cancer research with a health equity lens that integrates community organizations as equal partners in addressing research questions. Since inception, ChicagoCHEC has funded eleven research teams through the ChicagoCHEC Incubator, Catalyst Grant Program, and NCI supplement funding. Such grants are intended to encourage collaborations among diverse teams of investigators (including students and trainees) across our three institutions. They are also designed to be inclusive of community partners and organizations, therefore each research team consists of one or more community stakeholders as an integral member of the research team.

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<tr>
<th>ChicagoCHEC Incubator and Catalyst Pilot Projects:</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ALAS-Wings</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: Mi Guía)</td>
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<td><strong>Illinois Tobacco Quitline</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: Choose to Change)</td>
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<td><strong>Near North Health</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: Choose to Change)</td>
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<td><strong>Access Living</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: WeCanConnect)</td>
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<td><strong>Project Brotherhood</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: Prostate Cancer Disparities &amp; Citizen Scientists)</td>
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<td><strong>Puerto Rican Cultural Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: Obesity in Latino Men)</td>
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<td><strong>Mercy Hospital &amp; Medical Center</strong>&lt;br&gt;(Research Team: Breast Cancer Disparities)</td>
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<tr>
<th>MI GUÍA (MY GUIDE)</th>
<th>Built an educational and support app to improve symptoms and quality of life during and after treatment among Hispanic Breast Cancer survivors.</th>
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<td><strong>CHOOSE TO CHANGE STUDY</strong></td>
<td>Partnered with community health centers and the IL Tobacco Quitline to reduce tobacco use in Chicago.</td>
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<td><strong>WECANCONNECT</strong></td>
<td>Used mHealth to connect physically disabled cancer patients with matched disabled survivors.</td>
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<td><strong>PROSTATE CANCER DISPARITY IN CHICAGO-AREA AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN</strong></td>
<td>Developed cell models to improve tailored prostate cancer risk assessment &amp; treatment among African American men.</td>
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<td><strong>REDUCING OBESITY AMONG PUERTO RICAN &amp; MEXICAN MEN</strong></td>
<td>Evaluated an obesity intervention program for Latino men to reduce obesity.</td>
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<td><strong>ENGAGING CITIZEN SCIENTISTS TO COMBAT PROSTATE CANCER</strong></td>
<td>Trained citizen scientists to engage, partner, and participate in research to combat prostate cancer in African American men through screening.</td>
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<td><strong>MOLECULAR APPROACHES TO BREAST CANCER</strong></td>
<td>Analyzed of breast tissue from African American women with respect to environmental exposure to examine disparities between African American and White women.</td>
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COMMUNITY PARTNERS

We are committed to engaging, mobilizing, and supporting community capacity building efforts to improve health outcomes among Chicago’s underserved communities. ChicagoCHEC’s Community Steering Committee, a board of over 25 community leaders, guides the direction of ChicagoCHEC along with trained Community Health Educators (CHEs). Meet our Community Steering Committee and Leaders!

OUR COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Henrietta Barcelo (Co-Chair), INSTITUTO Health Sciences Career Academy & Instituto del Progreso Latino
Joanne Glenn (Co-Chair), W.O.T. Foundation Inc.
Andie Baker & Eriika Etshokin, Howard Brown Health
Patricia Canessa, Illinois Public Health Association
Dolores Castañeda, Community Activist
Kristina Hamilton, American Lung Association in Greater Chicago
Laura Jane Hyde, Gilda’s Club Chicago
Jose López, Puerto Rican Cultural Center
Linda Rae Murray, former Chief Medical Officer, Cook County Health & Hospital System
Kirsten Peachey, The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation

Jered Pruitt, Chinese American Service League
Fred Rachman, Alliance Chicago Community Health Services, LLC
Tom Wilson, Former Community Organizer, AccessLiving
RoseMarie Rogers, Patient Advocate
Joanna Rudnicka, Amber Coalition, Polish-American Breast Cancer Program
Berenice Tow, Chicago Department of Public Health
Amy Schwartz, CSC Affiliate
Esther Sciammarella, Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition
Carmen Velásquez, Founder and former Executive Director of Alivio Medical Center
Kyle Westbrook, Partnership for College Completion

Project Brotherhood
projectbrotherhood.net/

partnershipfcc.org/

accessliving.org/

alas-wings.org/
aliviomedicalcenter.org/alliancechicago.org/
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<th>Organization</th>
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<td>Amber Coalition</td>
<td>ambercoalition.org/</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION</td>
<td>lung.org/about-us/local-associations/illinois.html</td>
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<td>The Center for Faith and Community Health Transformation</td>
<td>faithhealthtransformation.org/</td>
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<td>NearNorth Health Service Corporation</td>
<td>nearnorthhealth.org/</td>
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<td>Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition</td>
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<td>Chinese American Service League</td>
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<td>Gilda’s Club Chicago</td>
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<td>TAKE ON CANCER</td>
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<td>Howard Brown Health</td>
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<td>The Puerto Rican Cultural Center</td>
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<td>Wellness House</td>
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<td>W.O.T. Foundation</td>
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For more information on our community partners please check out our Community Resource Guide! 
[https://chicagochec.org/resources/resource-guide/](https://chicagochec.org/resources/resource-guide/)
Every summer, ChicagoCHEC hosts its Summer Fellows Program. This eight-week training program provides Chicago university students from underrepresented groups with the opportunity to learn about cancer health equity from doctors, researchers, professors, and community organizers. Our goal is to both inform and inspire these Fellows as the next generation of physicians and cancer researchers who will carry ChicagoCHEC’s mission forward.
Over the past five years, ChicagoCHEC has made great strides in advancing cancer health equity in Chicago through meaningful research, community engagement, and training & education. Below are a few of our main accomplishments!

**Built a strong collaborative** that includes: an Administrative Core (AC), Planning & Evaluation Core (PEC), Community Engagement Core (CEC), Research Education Core (REC), Community Steering Committee (CSC), Internal Advisory Committee (IAC), and external Program Steering Committee (PSC).

**Established a diverse, city-wide, 24-member Community Steering Committee.** Members participated in research project selection, served as project co-investigators, supported student summer programming, guided community engagement efforts, organized annual community forums, and co-authored 6 peer-reviewed health policy publications with ChicagoCHEC faculty.

**Initiated the ChicagoCHEC Incubator & Catalyst Grants Program** with 9 completed cancer research projects involving 32 investigators 40% underrepresented minorities (URM) across the 3 institutions, 77 students (59% URM) & 12 community partners.

**Launched the ChicagoCHEC Fellows Program and Laboratory Experiences and Programs (LEaP)** totaling 89 students from NEIU, UIC, City Colleges of Chicago, and NU, all URM and/or first-generation college students.

**Engaged in over 100 community events in Chicago, reaching 14,000+ individuals** (23 sponsored by ChicagoCHEC). 54 events were conducted by Community Health Educators that were informed by the priorities of the NCI National Outreach Network (NON).

**Submitted 47 cancer relevant extramural grants & published 94 peer-reviewed publications** from ChicagoCHEC investigators. 24 new grant awards were direct outcomes of ChicagoCHEC-funded projects. An additional 94 cancer relevant manuscripts published in ChicagoCHEC related areas.

**Developed a cancer relevant curriculum at NEIU,** including the launch of the Master of Public Health Program with a concentration in Cancer Health Disparities.

**Promotion of ChicagoCHEC’s underrepresented faculty** and faculty conducting cancer disparities research, including 11 at NEIU, 3 at NU, 3 at UIC, and an endowed chair/professorship.
Stay Involved with ChicagoCHEC
The ChicagoCHEC website is jam-packed with information and resources, along with information on the many ChicagoCHEC-sponsored community events throughout the city. Visit www.chicagochec.org for more information.

Be a Partner with ChicagoCHEC
We want to hear from you and your community organizations! We work with organizations like yours by collaborating to provide education and outreach events, training opportunities, and other cancer health initiatives. Help us tailor programming to meet the needs of your community.

Be a Connector
Network with other organizations, listen to the voices of residents, and serve as a connector for resources and linkages to reduce health disparities!

Help us Empower Our Future
Are you or your organization working with underrepresented minorities who are interested in science and medicine? Link them to ChicagoCHEC! We have an annual CHEC Fellows Program and more! We have opportunities for undergraduate and post-baccalaureate students.

ChicagoCHEC Summer Fellows met with Senator Dick Durbin to discuss the importance of pursuing health equity research careers.
We are indebted to our community leaders and partners, faculty members, research and administrative staff, and students/trainees for their engaged participation and continued support.

Thank you for being with us throughout the past 5 years. We look forward to serving our community in more years to come!

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We welcome questions and comments from our readers. Please direct correspondence to info@chicagochec.org.

Further information can be found at http://chicagochec.org/

Twitter: @ChicagoChec
Facebook: ChicagoCHEC
Instagram: @teamchicagochec
YouTube: Chicago CHEC

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