



Sylvester Researcher Addresses Hispanic Cancer Care Disparities during Panel Discussion with Dr. Jill Biden

On February 23, First Lady Jill Biden, Ed.D., listened as Patricia I. Moreno, Ph.D., lead of Evidence-Based Survivorship Supportive Care at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, talked about what Sylvester researchers are doing to address quality of life in cancer care and reduce disparities among Hispanics and Latinos.



Dr. Jill Biden welcomes Dr. Patricia Moreno to the panel discussion. Photo courtesy of Mays Cancer Center at UT Health San Antonio.

Dr. Moreno was among four U.S. cancer researchers and experts serving on the Planning Committee of the Advancing the Science of Cancer in Latinos Conference that was being held at the same time in San Antonio, Texas, who were chosen by Dr. Biden's staff to speak on a panel with the First Lady and Dr. Norman Sharpless, Director of the National Cancer Institute.

"It was a phenomenal opportunity to shed light to the White House and Dr. Biden on the innovation happening at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center regarding quality of



life and survivorship in individuals affected by cancer, particularly Hispanics and Latinos,” Dr. Moreno said. “Dr. Biden was very engaged and seemed interested in our work to incorporate the patients’ voice in their care as a way to manage their symptoms and improve their well-being and quality of life while they undergo cancer treatment.”

“Dr. Moreno’s invitation to participate in Dr. Jill Biden’s cancer panel is a testament to the critical work being conducted at Sylvester to eliminate gaps in cancer prevention and treatment and promote better outcomes for Hispanics across the U.S.,” said Frank J. Penedo, Ph.D., Sylvester’s associate director for Cancer Survivorship and Translational Behavioral Sciences.

“I am extremely pleased and honored that Dr. Biden identified Dr. Moreno’s work and our Hispanic/Latino Cancer Survivorship Study, which we lead from Miami as instrumental research in place that informs how to eliminate cancer disparities in Hispanics. This truly shows that Sylvester is among the leaders in this area and that our work is being recognized by the White House,” said Dr. Penedo, who also serves on the Planning Committee for the Advancing the Science of Cancer in Latinos Conference.

Quality of Life throughout Treatment

During her three-minute presentation to Dr. Biden, Dr. Moreno highlighted Sylvester’s My Wellness Check initiative, which focuses on routinely assessing psychological and physical symptoms, as well as care needs among Sylvester’s cancer patients. The initiative addresses quality of life throughout treatment and ensures that patients are connected to the right services as quickly as possible, according to Dr. Moreno.



Dr. Moreno received a five-year grant funded by the National Cancer Institute to study how My Wellness Check can improve quality of life and symptom management specifically in Hispanics and Latinos who have metastatic cancer by ensuring that they receive the best care possible and are connected to services like palliative medicine earlier.

“Our goal is to make sure that we effectively address their symptoms and concerns so that these patients live as well as possible following a stage 4 diagnosis, which can be a unique and challenging time. Metastatic cancer is an area of cancer survivorship that has received very little attention, particularly among Hispanics and Latinos,” Dr. Moreno said.



Dr. Frank Penedo spoke at the conference about Sylvester's role in the Avanzando Caminos survivorship study.

Dr. Sharpless emphasized to Dr. Biden the importance of initiatives like My Wellness Check to identify and address treatment side effects that cause complications or bothersome symptoms, known as toxicities:

“An important point, Dr. Biden, is that in the old days you would go in and see your oncologist once every three weeks for treatment, and they would say, ‘How do you feel?’ and you would say ‘I feel ok,’ and he or she would move on. We missed about half of their symptoms. So this movement to use the Internet and digital tools and cell phones, this patient-reported outcomes movement, is really important.”



A Collaborative Study of Health Outcomes

Dr. Penedo presented during the conference on Sylvester's work on the "Avanzando Caminos" (Leading Pathways): The Hispanic/Latino Cancer Survivorship Study. The National Cancer Institute awarded a six-year, \$9.8 million grant to Sylvester and the Mays Cancer Center at UT Health San Antonio to collaborate on this study examining how social, cultural, behavioral, psychosocial, biological, and medical factors may influence health outcomes following primary cancer treatment in Hispanics and Latinos.

San Antonio was among the First Lady's stops on a tour of U.S. cancer centers. In February, the White House announced that President Biden reignited the Cancer Moonshot with renewed White House leadership. The goals of the Cancer Moonshot are to reduce the death rate from cancer by at least 50% over the next 25 years and improve the experience of people and their families living with and surviving cancer, according to a White House press release.

"Patients should feel reassured that the White House is committed to improving the lives of those affected by cancer, which includes addressing disparities in diverse communities like the catchment area that Sylvester serves," Dr. Moreno said. "It's exciting. I was thrilled to see Dr. Biden's commitment and her support of the work that we're doing."

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