Background

In 2009, NCI’s CRCHD launched its Geographic & Biospecimen Science Management Programs (G/BMaP), which groups cancer health disparity (CHD) research and outreach efforts by geographic region.

The goal is to create a regional network wherein resources can be pooled to facilitate the reduction of CHDs through inter-institutional collaborations.

There are 6 regions across the country. Region 1 (DC, MD, VA, WV) includes 15 universities/institutions.

Methods

Region 1 began with a thorough cataloging of institutional resources. Two survey instruments, well as multiple sub-surveys, were circulated within Region 1 to collect extensive information on institutional interests, resources, and cooperation potential.

Resource assessment data, a structure was created to facilitate the pursuit of Region 1 strengths centered on the concept of “collaborative network mechanisms.” These mechanisms serve as organized structures that are ready and able to efficiently respond to project/initiative opportunities via a Core Committee (Voting members - one per Region 1 institution, Program Coordinator, Region 1 institutional member participants, NCI representatives, Community members, etc.). Each network will follow NIH Study Section reviewer methodology. Currently, each collaborative network mechanism has already developed initial projects/themes with which to pilot and evaluate this structure.

Phase III Themes

Based on Resource Assessment data, a structure was created to facilitate the pursuit of Region 1 strengths centered on the concept of “collaborative network mechanisms.” These mechanisms serve as organized structures that are ready and able to efficiently respond to project/initiative opportunities via a Core Committee (Voting members - one per Region 1 institution, Program Coordinator, Region 1 institutional member participants, NCI representatives, Community members, etc.). Each network will follow NIH Study Section reviewer methodology. Currently, each collaborative network mechanism has already developed initial projects/themes with which to pilot and evaluate this structure.

Collaborative Networks for Clinical and Laboratory-based Initiatives (CONCALI): Pursue CHD-oriented clinical and laboratory-based research.

Develop a web-based and compatible database of de-identified biospecimen data that allows researchers to identify collaborative opportunities for testing hypotheses related to CHDs (Lead: Lucile Adams-Campbell, PhD, Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center)

Collaborative Networks for Community Engagement and Research Translation (CONCERT): Meaningfully and equitably engage communities in community translation as well as engage in social/behavioral oncology research.

Research theme: What is the role of patient navigation in health care education, social attitudes, health behavior changes, and participation in clinical trials, biospecimen banking, and cancer risks studies as related to CHDs?

Region 1 is planning to pursue a pilot project within this overall research theme using the following research question:

What is the effect of patient navigation on patient activation and self-management? (Lead: Steven Patierno, PhD, George Washington University Cancer Institute)

Collaborative Networks for Training Initiatives (CONTI): Train the next generation of cancer researchers by involving strategies for recruitment, mentorship, and retention of individuals from diverse and underserved populations.

- Expansion of UDC “Cancer Research and Education Academy” (Lead: Deepak Kumar, PhD- University of the District of Columbia)
- Training Program in Cancer Disparities Research (TPCDR) for Minority Health Care Students (Lead: Ayman Noredin, PhD, RPs- Hampton University)
- Regional Postgraduate Mentoring Program (Lead: Jean Ford, MD- Johns Hopkins University)

Implications

The Region 1 structure is the product of almost two years of thorough Resource Assessments and inter-institutional collaborative brainstorming. This group effort has resulted in an innovative framework that has the potential to maximize connectivity within Region 1 to facilitate CHD-oriented research, outreach, and training- with the ultimate goal of making a real and meaningful impact on CHDs as a whole.