



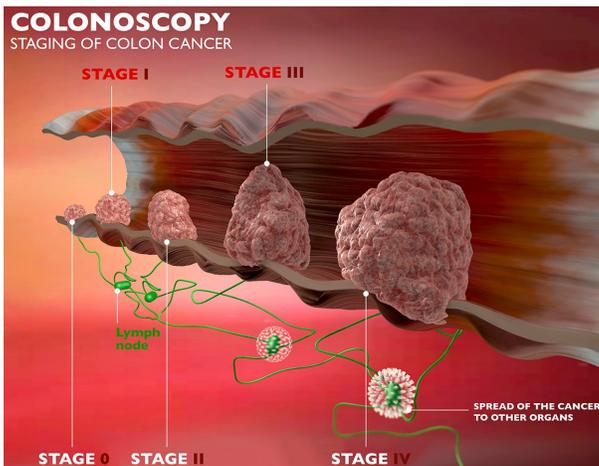
# DHR Health Cancer Research Center is Offering Innovative Clinical Trials using Targeted Immunotherapy for Patients with Colorectal Cancers

The Cancer Research Center at DHR Health Institute for Research and Development has initiated two advanced clinical trials to treat patients with colorectal cancers using targeted immunotherapy. Funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Institutes of Health (NIH), and under the direction of Dr. Shravan Narmala, a board-certified medical oncologist at DHR Health, these trials would use combination immunotherapy for very high-risk patients with deficient DNA mismatch repair metastatic colorectal cancers.

Recognizing the need to offer advanced cancer care to patients in South Texas, DHR Health Institute for Research & Development has established a Cancer Research Center in Edinburg. As a dedicated advanced clinical research facility, the Cancer Research Center offers the most innovative and state-of-the-art clinical trials in the areas of breast, liver, colorectal, ovarian, lung, pancreatic, prostate, and other solid organ tumors. It has also initiated clinical trials in patients with lymphomas, leukemias, and other cancers in the blood.



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“All existing cancer treatment is investigational and presently, majority of the patients who are exploring the opportunity to enroll in advanced cancer trials have to travel out of the Valley to distant locations” said Sohail Rao, MD, MA, DPhil, President and CEO, DHR Health Institute for Research & Development “This places enormous psychosocial and financial burden on the patients and their caregivers and seriously disrupts the continuity of care that these patients most rightfully deserve. This is equally onerous for patients with colorectal cancer which is the fourth most common malignancy and the second most frequent cause of cancer-related death in the United States”.

To alleviate this encumbrance and to ensure that cancer patients receive the most advanced clinical care in the Valley, the Cancer Research Center at DHR Health Institute for Research & Development has obtained full membership of SWOG Cancer Research Network with access to hundreds of NCI funded prevention and treatment trials. Additionally, the Cancer Research Center is also a member of the Texas Hepatocellular Carcinoma Consortium, the Hoosier Cancer Research Network and it will continue to initiate novel clinical trials with these partners and with multiple collaborators in the biopharmaceutical industry.

If you or your patient is interested to participate or learn more about cancer clinical trials, please call 956-362-2395. To learn more about the trials, click on the links below:

Randomized Trial of Standard Chemotherapy Alone or Combined with Atezolizumab as Adjuvant Therapy for Patients with Stage III Colon Cancer and Deficient DNA Mismatch Repair. <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02912559>

Colorectal Cancer Metastatic dMMR/MSI-H Immuno-Therapy (COMMIT) Study: A Randomized Phase III Study of mFOLFOX6/Bevacizumab/Atezolizumab Combination Versus Single Agent Atezolizumab in the First-Line Treatment of Patients with Deficient DNA Mismatch Repair (dMMR)/Microsatellite Instability-High (MSI-H) Metastatic Colorectal Cancer. <https://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT02997228>

# Visit by Senator Juan “Chuy” Hinojosa



U.S. Senator Juan "Chuy" Hinojosa visited DHR Health Institute for Research & Development on Tuesday, April 19, 2022 to discuss research related to prevention of childhood obesity in the Rio Grande Valley. Included in the meeting were Roberto P. Trevino, MD., Director, Social & Health Research Center (SAHRC), San Antonio, Texas and Sohail Rao, MD, MA, DPhil, President & CEO, DHR Health Institute for Research & Development.

Dr. Trevino apprised Senator Hinojosa of the ongoing research collaboration with the investigators at the DHR health Institute for Research & Development in the area of prevention and management of obesity and associated chronic diseases in children and adults.

The SAHRC operates the Bienestar pre-kindergarten to 8th grade coordinated school health program for children and the Bienestar Healthy Lifestyle program for adults. The Bienestar school health program is culturally appropriate for high-risk children. The program's coordinated curriculums are designed for health classes, physical education, school food service, and parents. The Bienestar has been adopted as an official health curriculum by the Texas Education Agency and has been recognized as Proven Effective by the National Cancer Institute, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, and the Healthy Communities Institute.

The SAHRC also implements the Bienestar Healthy Lifestyle Adult program. This program is based on the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) intensive behavioral therapy for obesity (BTO). The Bienestar program follows the programming schedule set by CMS: an introductory/get to know you session with one of our certified lifestyle coaches, 16 sessions every week the first four months, 2 a month for the next five months, and 1 a month for the next 3 months (30 sessions a year). Participants then also have the option of quarterly maintenance sessions during their second year.

## 3rd Annual South Texas Comprehensive Health Care Symposium

The Trauma Regional Advisory Council (TRAC-V) held the 3rd Annual South Texas Comprehensive Healthcare Symposium at the Courtyard by Marriott at South Padre Island. The Symposium was designed to meet the educational needs for Pre-hospital and Hospital Providers who diligently provide care to injured patients. This year's Symposium featured speakers considered experts in the field of Cardiac, Perinatal, Stroke, and Trauma. The three-day conference was held on April 21-23, 2022.



# Junior Clinical Research Internship 2022



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In partnership with Region One ESC, DHR Health Institute for Research and Development is pleased to launch the 2nd Annual Junior Clinical Research Internship (JCRI) program for rising high school juniors. This novel and innovative program has been designed to run over four sessions with 50 students/session/two weeks and is offered as an undergraduate level “immersion” experience that exposes high school students to the basics of clinical research and patient care with the goal of enhancing student interest in biomedical sciences and in future careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

We envision that didactic and practicum activities for students will foster a better understanding of biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research and their implications on the public health challenges that are prevalent in our predominantly Hispanic community. At the end of their internship, students will be required to publish a short report/manuscript in a scientific journal.

Dr. Sohail Rao, President and CEO, DHR Health Institute for Research and Development said participation of the Hispanic community in clinical research is extremely low and the program is a way to bring more awareness.

Kaylen Saucedo and Allison Alvarez, both tenth grade students are Harlingen High School South, were selected for the program. “It’s going to be like a really intense program, but I’m excited to see what they’re going to offer me,” said Saucedo.

If you or your school is interested in participating in this program, please contact your local GEAR UP facilitator.

A limited number of paid seats are available for family members of the DHR Health Community. If you have a child in high school, please contact the individuals listed on the flyer.

Registration will be on a first come first serve basis.

**Junior Clinical Research Internship 2022**

**SESSION 1**  
June 6 - June 17

**SESSION 2**  
June 20 - July 1

**SESSION 3**  
July 11 - July 22

**SESSION 4**  
July 25 - August 4

**TIME** 10 AM - 4 PM

**GRADUATION**  
August 6 • 10 AM - 1 PM

**LOCATION**  
**Edinburg Conference Center at Renaissance**  
118 Paseo Del Prado, Edinburg, TX

**OBJECTIVES**

- To expose to and engage in the discipline of translational and clinical research
- To enhance the understanding of the importance of critical thinking and generation of new knowledge
- To reinforce the importance of life-long learning
- To foster a better understanding of the various disciplines in medicine and allied health sciences

**REGISTRATION**

- Open to DHR Health Community
- Availability is Limited
- Registration Deadline: May 13

For information call or email:  
Melissa Eddy (956) 362-2366  
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Xochitl Lopez (956) 362-2386  
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[DHRResearch.org](http://DHRResearch.org)

# Community Participation

Engaging in community service provides the Research Institute with the opportunity to become active members of our community and has a lasting, positive impact on society at large. Community service or volunteerism enables us to provide a service to those who need it most.

Constructive relationships between communities and the surrounding organizations make community engagement not only desirable, but necessary and viable as it is likely to lead to more equitable, sustainable public decisions and improve the liveability of local communities. This is why community engagement is important for individuals, public organizations, and governments alike.

The following are events from April.

## Quinta Mazatlan Monarch Festival



## McAllen Community Health Fair



## DHR Health Campus Clean Up



# Esophageal Cancer Awareness Month

Across the United States, esophageal cancer is a growing concern. The esophagus is the tube that runs from the throat to the stomach. It consists of muscle and tissues that allow swallowing of food and liquids.

According to the American Cancer Society, esophageal cancer is the seventh leading cancer killer among men. And while deaths due to esophageal cancer are down, the numbers of people being diagnosed are increasing. Survival rates are increasing, too, though they are still comparatively low. Men are more likely than women to be diagnosed with esophageal cancer.

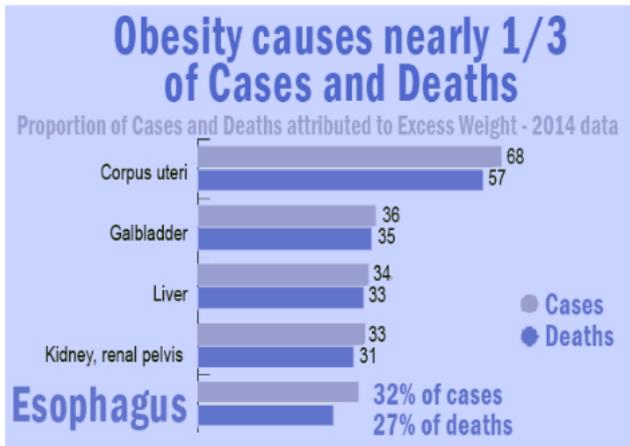
The data released as part of the American Cancer Society report Cancer Facts & Figures 2021 also showed that half of American Esophageal Cancer cases and deaths in 2014 were caused by cigarette smoking and nearly one-third were caused by excess weight.

There are several other risk factors that will increase an individual's risk of getting esophageal cancer including gastroesophageal reflux, alcohol use, bile reflux, Barrett's esophagus, achalasia, low fiber diet, and sedentary lifestyle.

As with many cancers, early detection improves survival rates. Some of the symptoms of esophageal cancer include:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Difficulty swallowing
- Pressure, burning or pain in the chest
- Increased heartburn or indigestion
- Cough
- Hoarse voice

With the advancement of research, we hope to help efforts in our local community by giving access to new diagnostic tools. For further information, please reach out to: Odalys Salinas, Clinical Research Study Coordinator at [oda.salinas@dhr-rgv.com](mailto:oda.salinas@dhr-rgv.com), or 956-362-2384.



\*Images from the Esophageal Cancer Action Network

## Research Team Spotlight: Adrienne Casciato DNP, APRN, NP-C



Meet Adrienne Casciato. Dr. Casciato serves as an advanced practice nurse at the DHR Health Institute for Research and Development. Dr. Casciato earned a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas- Pan American (now The University of Texas- Rio Grande Valley). She also earned a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi.

Before joining our team, Dr. Casciato gained integral experience in med/surg, family practice, urgent care, and in the emergency room. She is able to communicate with patients in both English and Spanish. In her free time, Dr. Casciato enjoys crafting and spending time with her family.

You can reach Dr. Casciato at (956) 362-2395 or [a.casiato@dhr-rgv.com](mailto:a.casiato@dhr-rgv.com)

## New Additions to the Team



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## Investigator Spotlight: Jose Cruz, DO



Dr. Jose Cruz is an oncologist and hematologist at the DHR Health Oncology Institute. Dr. Cruz is a Valley native who received a Master's Degree in Public Health from Texas A&M Health Science Center before he received

a Doctor Osteopathic Medicine from the University of North Texas Health Science Center Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine. He completed his residency at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center-Tulsa School of Community Medicine and a fellowship in Hematology and Oncology from the University of Louisiana Health Science Center-Shreveport.

Dr. Cruz is one of the leading research physicians that will welcome patients to the newly established Cancer Research Center within the DHR Health Institute for Research and Development.



DHR Proceedings is one of the premier peer-reviewed health sciences journals in general and specialty medicine. It is the first such scientific journal to be published in the Rio Grande Valley. DHR Proceedings is sponsored by DHR Health Institute for Research & Development and invites submission from authors in the region and worldwide.

DHR Proceedings can be accessed at: <https://dhrproceedings.org/index.php/DHRP/index>

**DHR Proceedings is currently welcoming submissions for a publication date in the spring of 2022.**



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