



[Home > News](#)

Search

Research

Education / Outreach

News

Media Releases
TGen Podcasts
TGen Newsfeed (RSS)
Receive Email News

Help Support TGen

About TGen

Contact

TGen North

Translational Drug Development (TD2)

Media Contacts

Galen Perry
602.343.8423
gperry@tgen.org

First-of-its-kind cancer awareness conference planned Oct. 11 in Window Rock for Arizona's Native American communities

PHOENIX, Ariz. – Oct. 1, 2008 – The Arizona Myeloma Network, working with other non-profit groups throughout Arizona, is planning its first Fort Defiance Cancer Awareness and Advocacy Conference focusing on the health challenges facing Native Americans.

The free Oct. 11 conference at the Navajo Nation Museum in Window Rock, is being co-sponsored by the John Wayne Cancer Foundation, named for the actor made famous by movies such as *Stagecoach* and *The Searchers*, filmed in the Navajo Nation's Monument Valley.

The gathering will include speakers from cancer-care organizations and hospitals, providing information about services, resources and advances in cancer treatments.

The conference was conceived by Mechelle Morgan-Flowers, a nurse and supervisor who works at the nearby Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, on the high desert plateau of northeastern Arizona.

"My professional experience with cancer patients has led me to believe there is a need for increased awareness about cancer in the communities we serve," said Morgan-Flowers, who has tended the health needs of the Navajo Nation since 1996.

Morgan-Flowers got the idea in March while attending a cancer awareness program in Scottsdale sponsored by the Arizona Myeloma Network.

Organizers hope the conference will result in increased access to medical resources, improved services and better cancer treatments for the Navajo Nation, which spans parts of Arizona, Utah and New Mexico.

"Not everyone can travel (for hours to larger metro areas) for specialized care," said Barbara Kavanagh, founder and chief executive officer of the Arizona Myeloma Network, which helps victims of a form of bone-marrow cancer.

After being contacted by Morgan-Flowers, Kavanagh sought the help of other Arizona organizations, including the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen). In 2006, TGen joined with the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard in launching the Multiple Myeloma Genomics Initiative, a multi-million-dollar cutting-edge genome-mapping collaboration designed to combat this deadly cancer with advanced treatments.

Kavanagh connected with Dr. Bodour Salhia, a post-doctorate fellow who is investigating breast cancer and multiple myeloma at TGen's Integrated Cancer Genomics Division.

To see first-hand the problems involved in rural Indian healthcare, Kavanagh and Salhia traveled in July to Fort Defiance to visit with Morgan-Flowers and other health professionals serving the Navajo



 E-MAIL THIS ARTICLE

 PRINT THIS PAGE

 SIGN-UP FOR NEWS

 Podcasts

 NewsFeed

people.

"We just listened to what people had to say. People are dying, and they are so underserved," said Sahlia, who has since worked in an advisory role to organize the conference, establish its goals, contact speakers and help set the agenda.

Access to specialized care is among the highest needs among underserved communities like the Navajo Nation. Convenient transportation is unavailable to many. Cancer patients must travel hundreds of miles to larger metro areas like Phoenix, Flagstaff and Albuquerque to receive care and treatment.

Parts of the vast Navajo Nation are among the most rural places in Arizona. During the fall and winter, snow and rain can make its thousands of miles of dirt roads impassible. The 17-million-acre Navajo Nation includes 11.6 million acres in Arizona, or nearly one-sixth of The Grand Canyon State.

*

Primary agenda items:

-- Two of the first items on the daylong conference agenda are discussions with medicine men about traditional views of cancer, and about the contributions of traditional medicine with modern treatments.

-- A medical discussion about the basics of cancer.

-- How to live with cancer, including proper nutrition, managing symptoms and managing side effects of treatments, the role of family members and others, and strategies for dealing with the impact of diagnosis on relationships.

-- How to get help on the reservation, including a discussion of planned programs, and the importance of providing and receiving emotional and psychological support.

-- Next steps for professional health care providers, including building and improving cancer programs, identifying resources for patients and caregivers, and a discussion about how to better provide access to care.

*

About the conference

What: Fort Defiance Cancer Awareness and Advocacy Conference.

Where: Navajo Nation Museum, Arizona 264 and Postal Loop Road, Window Rock, Arizona.

When: 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Oct. 11.

Who: Open to the public.

Cost: Free.

Why: To help provide Arizona's Native Americans with a higher awareness of cancer and greater access to medical care.

Primary sponsors: Arizona Myeloma Network, Black Bear Diners and the John Wayne Cancer Foundation.

Participating organizations: Fort Defiance Indian Hospital, Navajo Nation, Intertribal Council of Arizona, Arizona Advisory Council on Indian Health Care, Southwest American Indian Collaborative Network, Dine' College, Mayo Clinic, Translational Genomics Research Institute, Scottsdale Healthcare, Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center, St. Joseph's Cancer Center, Arizona Cancer Coalition, Leukemia & Lymphoma

Society (Desert Mountain States Chapter), AeroCare Medical Transport, AmeriChoice Insurance Agency/United HealthCare Insurance Co., Arizona State University, University of Arizona, and Northern Arizona University.

Details, or to provide sponsorships or donations:
www.azmyelomanetwork.org, or Barbara Kavanagh at 623-388-6837;
or Mechelle Morgan-Flowers at 928-729-8024 or -8476.

###

[Home](#) | [About TGen](#) | [Research](#) | [Clinical Research](#) | [Research Services](#) | [Education/Outreach](#)

[News](#) | [Help Support TGen](#) | [Contact](#) | [Careers](#)

Copyright 2008, The Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen)
445 N. Fifth Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004
phone 602.343.8400 toll free 1.800.642.4432