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HoMBReS—Preventing HIV Among Latino Men

Latinos in the United States have higher HIV infection and mortality rates than whites, a medical discrepancy that is especially significant in North Carolina, home to one of the fastest-growing Latino populations in the country. According to professor and chair of Social Sciences and Health Policy Scott D. Rhodes, PhD, MPH, there have been no effective HIV prevention interventions designed for immigrant Latino adults in the United States and offered in Spanish—until recently.

HoMBReS: *Hombres Manteniendo Bienestar y Relaciones Saludables* (Men Maintaining Wellness and Healthy Relationships) is a unique intervention that was developed, implemented and evaluated by Wake Forest University School of Medicine under the direction of Dr. Rhodes and in close partnership with community-based organizations, health departments, and the lay community.

The objective of HoMBReS is to promote community health among adult Latino men. It involves the recruitment of peer leaders, or lay health advisors, called *Navegantes*. *Navegantes* are trained on how to avoid and prevent HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. They then share this knowledge with their peers and teammates in local soccer leagues. Because *Navegantes* are natural leaders within the community, they continue to work with other men after the study has ended, reaching more men in their communities and potentially further reducing the spread of HIV.

Data from the pilot study demonstrated a significant increase in condom use and HIV testing among intervention teams compared to control teams. Based on positive findings and the groundbreaking nature of this intervention, HoMBReS is now being replicated, and the National Institutes of Health are in the process of disseminating the results throughout the country. Dr. Rhodes and his team also are testing the process of implementing the intervention in three types of organizations that typically conduct HIV prevention activities in the U.S.: a public health department, a Latino-serving organization, and an AIDS service organization.

Researchers also are adapting the intervention to test whether reaching out to other types of informal social networks can reduce risk among Latino gay men, male farm workers, and Latina women. These interventions not only promote condom use to prevent HIV but also address other sexually transmitted diseases, helping to reduce HIV and sexually transmitted diseases within the U.S. Latino community.



HoMBReS project team members, left to right: PI Dr. Rhodes, Assoc. Project Mgr. Mario Downs; and Lay Health Advisors Vicente Medina and Apolinar Tapia.