Carbajal expected the same from his groups of Latino men.

"They've been very open and willing to talk about it," Carbajal said. "There are myths out there, like too much or too little sex causes prostate cancer. We're able to discuss and dispel those myths."

About 10 percent of the men in his groups say they already have been screened for prostate cancer. At the end of the intervention, the majority in the group say they want to get tested. For those that don't have insurance, a list of clinics that offer free screening is provided. Follow-up by HARP researchers will determine how follow through in program participants compared to men who didn't receive the intervention.

Carbajal is very impressed with the intervention study. "Each slide, each word, everything we talk about is processed in the correct cultural context," he said. "I'm imparting very solid information in a way they can understand."

The program is conducted in Spanish and fills a huge void, according to Carbajal. The Spanish-language media, especially the smaller newspapers, are filled with advertisements for medical treatments and alternative remedies that likely have not undergone rigorous testing. The UCLA program provides scientifically solid information and serves as a strong counterpoint to the misinformation the men may be getting elsewhere.

"This is a vulnerable population," Carbajal said. "If the product being advertised is cheap enough and promises to address the issue, then they'll go with that nine times out of 10."

Because people can be easily misled, Bastani will continue to find new and more effective means to provide accurate information about cancer prevention and screening to local communities.

"The bulk of the money in cancer is spent on treatment, not on prevention and early detection." Bastani said. "But the greatest payoff comes from promoting population-wide cancer prevention and early detection strategies."

Bastani likes to talk about Pap smears and cervical cancer in explaining why her work is so important. Cervical cancer is a leading cause of cancer death worldwide, and it was one of the leading causes of cancer death in the United States in the first half of the last century. Today, it's an uncommon cancer in the U.S. and causes few deaths, but not because of a revolutionary new treatment. The drop in incidence and deaths is attributed to the Pap smear, which detects precancerous lesions and treatable early cancers.

But the mere introduction of the Pap smear was not sufficient in reducing incidence of and deaths from cervical cancer.

"The Pap smear was introduced in the 1940s, but had no effect on reducing incidence and deaths until the 1970s and 1980s," Bastani said. "It was large scale research in cancer prevention and control like the kind we do that resulted in discovering the most effective way to promote widespread adoption of the Pap smear in diverse populations. That brought the rates down.

"We're facing a similar situation with colorectal cancer screening now. The technology exists, but because it is not adopted widely, colorectal cancer incidence and mortality continue to be high. We want to change that."

## **UCLA-Avon Cares for Life**

avigating your way through a large county hospital can be as difficult as driving the 405 Freeway at rush hour. When you have just learned you have breast cancer, it can be terrifying.

But a new program is providing a GPS system of sorts to help women diagnosed with breast cancer at the Olive View-UCLA Medical Center get the primary and follow-up care they need.

The UCLA-Avon Cares for Life program, offered through UCLA's Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center, is funded by a grant from the Avon Foundation. It has proven invaluable to low-income, underinsured and uninsured women, many of them minorities, who are treated for breast cancer at the county hospital. The women are guided by bilingual case workers from diagnosis through chemotherapy and beyond.

"We make sure they understand their diagnosis and meet with the appropriate doctors," said Lori Viveros, who manages the program. "We help them overcome language barriers and make sure they receive the right follow-up care. We provide the patients with literature and educational materials to help them understand what's ahead. It really helps them to have the big picture."

Case workers are there to hold the patient's hand, literally and figuratively, through the cancer experience. They are there when the patient receives her first round of chemotherapy, providing comfort at a very scary time. Viveros said many patients are not accompanied by family members to medical appointments because of work conflicts, so the women would otherwise be alone.

"One of the most important things we provide is a sense of comfort," said Viveros. "They're newly diagnosed with cancer and frightened. They don't know where to go or what to do. Sometimes they're not able to understand what their doctors are telling them. We help them get everything done that needs to be done."

When Sheryl Brefka, 49, of Lancaster, was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2006, she said her reaction was "pure terror."

"Everyone I knew who had cancer died. I thought I was going to die," Brefka said.

Finding her way around the large county facility was a daunting prospect, she said, "especially considering the kind of shape I was in after finding out I had cancer."

The program, she said, was her salvation.

"I was so impressed with it," Brefka said. "With Lori there, the hospital didn't seem so big. She helped me keep track of my appointments, showed me where my doctor was, and told where I had to go next. The help and comfort that I got through the program made having cancer not as horrifying as it would otherwise have been."

The UCLA-Avon Cares For Life program grew out of a pilot program, also funded by the Avon Foundation. Working in concert with the Olive View medical staff in radiology, general surgery, and medical oncology, the program has assisted 189 patients with breast cancer as of June 2007. About 89 percent of patients who entered the program as newly diagnosed patients have adhered to their treatment plan.

With the new grant from Avon, the program is expanding. A program to follow patients at high risk for developing breast cancer is being created. Survivorship services also will be offered to patients. Partnerships will be formed with regional county health clinics in the Olive View service area to ensure smooth transitions for women diagnosed with breast abnormalities in the community. And four new clinical trials for breast cancer are planned as well.

The \$1 million Avon grant also is helping to fund a new mammography suite with the newest digital technology at the Santa Monica-UCLA campus, an imaging center under the direction of Dr. Lawrence Bassett, a professor of radiology. The suite will help reduce the time that women have to wait for a mammogram. Breast imaging fellowships also are being funded by the grant. \*