Health Disparities Committee (HDC) Special Interest Groups (SIG)

Older Adult Research
Older adults experience a high burden of cancer but are often not represented in cancer research. The focus of the Older Adult Research SIG is to develop concepts that address issues that can improve care and the experience of older adults with cancer. This SIG builds on the past success of the Older Adult Working group who supported concepts focusing on issues such as therapeutic studies in older adults with breast and head and neck cancers, as well as chemotherapy completion rates, pre-operative assessment and post-operative outcomes in older women with gynecologic cancers.

Research Concept Development
As the HDC in NRG transitions into a protocol generating committee, the new focus will be to generate concepts and lead research that develops and evaluates interventions to remedy cancer health disparities. The Concept Development SIG (CDS) in the HDC will develop protocols to address disparities in cancer care outcomes among special populations that include racial/ethnic minorities, elderly and rural cancer patients, and other medically underserved groups. In addition to generating protocols that have a specific focus on cancer health disparities, the CDS will collaborate with other special interest groups in the HDC and other research committees to increase the portfolio of cancer health disparities research in NRG by integrating disparity research questions into concepts and protocols that are developed through CPCR, CCDR, and CTEP treatment trials. The CDS will also work with NRG research committees and interests’ groups to develop cancer health disparity concepts that use NRG Oncology datasets for secondary analysis projects that answer questions important to promoting health equity. The CDS will also provide support and mentorship for developing concepts and processing them through NCORP approval.

Research Implementation (Education/Training/Mentorship)
Barriers continue to hamper enrollment into cancer clinical trials of groups traditionally underrepresented including but not limited to the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ community. This SIG will continue the prior work of the HDC committee to improve underserved enrollment to NRG Oncology CTEP and NCORP trials. Activities include 1) outreach to assist investigators with enrollment barriers such as assisting in protocol design to minimize eligibility barriers and other challenges to accrual of diverse populations 2) review of trial accrual reports broken down by race, ethnicity, gender, and age to provide feedback and support to investigators as needed 3) planning and hosting a yearly health disparities workshop at the NRG Oncology meeting, 4) support a diverse workforce by implementation of a mentorship program in NRG Oncology and 5) provide additional educational activities to the NRG Oncology community to promote equity in cancer care.

Rural Research
Where a person lives matters to their health, individuals living in rural areas experience unique and challenging obstacles related to cancer screening, treatment, and symptom support. The SIG will tap into the network of NRG NCORP sites that serve rural residents to determine research priorities. With these priorities, the SIG will develop concepts targeted to improve the care and experience of individuals living in rural areas related to cancer. Opportunities will be sought to adapt evidence based interventions in academic settings to testing in rural communities.