Engaging health disparities in biomedical imaging research

Felipe Godinez

Department of Radiology, UC Davis

Radiology departments provide technically advanced imaging services critical to delivering auspicious patient care. The expectation is that irrespective of factors such as race, socioeconomical status, and cultural background; the benefits of Imaging technology should impact the healthcare of all persons equally. However, studies have found that these factors are associated with health disparities amongst non-white communities.

Health disparities can be met at the level of research through a manifold of actions. One approach is to inspire and mentor young students from underrepresented groups to pursue careers in biomedical sciences with programs at the high school level. In more advanced levels, fostering faculty candidates from minority backgrounds will help bring the issues affecting health disparities to the research forefront. An essential part in gaining the trust and support of the population in favor of these objectives is community engagement. This approach helps develop conversations with low-income communities and introduces them to the benefits of biomedical research. The Radiology Department at UC Davis health is poised to carry out these actions.

Here I show case the community engagement project that was part of the Explorer PET scanner research at UC Davis. Its primary goal was to promote greater inclusiveness of racial/ethnic minorities to benefit from the world's first ever total-body PET scanner (EXPLORER). In collaboration with the Biomedical Technology Program and the Community Advisory Board (UC Davis resources) several media outlets were used to introduce the Explorer scanner to the community. The results were increased participation of minority groups into ongoing clinical trials.

It is research planned with community involvement that will help bring more inclusivity to developing technology with equitable benefits. This will also help dissolve the cultural fears surrounding biomedical research and institutionalized medical care.

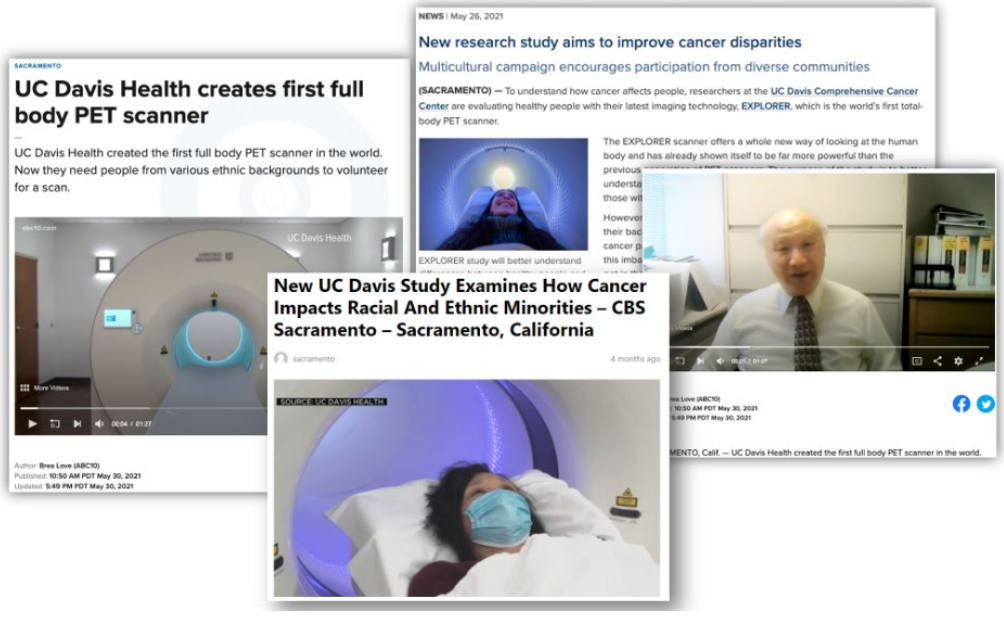

Figure 1 Examples of communications across several media outlets.