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## PRESS RELEASE

# UNM Cancer Center Awarded \$36,000 for Statewide Health Program

*Ventanilla de Salud Program expands health-related partnerships and outreach*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**May 20, 2013 — Albuquerque, NM (UNM Cancer Center)** — The Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs recently awarded the UNM Cancer Center a \$36,000 grant to continue its health initiatives statewide through the Ventanilla de Salud (“Health Window”) program. This is the third consecutive year that the VDS program has received substantial funds from the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs to continue its health initiatives statewide. Maria Otero is the University of New Mexico Cancer Center Director of Community Outreach for Hispanic/Latino Programs and manages the VDS program. She says, “We are thrilled to continue to work with the Mexican Consulate and to expand our initiatives. For people in the rural communities in our state, the treatment, screening and information this program provides can be life-saving.”

The Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs awards the grant through the Institute of Mexicans Abroad (IME) and the Consulate of Mexico in Albuquerque. “This program is critical for the health and well-being of the Mexican and Hispanic/Latino community in New Mexico,” explains the Consul of Mexico in Albuquerque, Mauricio Ibarra. “We are grateful to the UNM Cancer Center for their collaboration. And we are delighted to carry forward ‘Ventanilla de Salud’ in New Mexico. This program provides a perfect framework for guaranteeing two priorities of the Mexican government: provide consular protection and ensure health access to our people abroad, many of which reside or were born in New Mexico.”

Barbara Damron, PhD, RN, FAAN, and the Director of the Office of Community Partnerships and Cancer Health Disparities directly oversees the VDS program. “The Ventanilla de Salud program provides empowering health information to all who interact with the program, as well as referrals to low cost providers, and that helps to reduce cancer health disparities,” she says. Among the new initiatives this year are HIV and hepatitis C screening. Says Ms. Otero, “when we teach about preventing diabetes and cardiovascular disease, we also talk about preventing cancer.”

Cheryl Willman, MD, Director and CEO of the UNM Cancer Center, agrees. “We are very pleased to continue our partnership with the Mexican Consulate. As the Official Cancer Center of New Mexico, the UNM Cancer Center is committed to delivering world-class care to all New Mexicans. This partnership helps us to reach our state’s vibrant rural communities to provide potentially life-saving cancer education, prevention and early detection.”

The VDS program served over 9,000 people in 2012 and has operated a monthly mobile VDS in Santa Fe since 2010. Many of the 200 new referrals came through word-of-mouth. “We try to help as much as we can,” says Mónica Toquinto, VDS program coordinator and primary educator. “Sometimes we provide information, sometimes we provide even more important services.” Ms. Toquinto has helped to make medical appointments and has arranged to get patient medical records to the correct physician when patients from rural communities travel to Albuquerque for medical treatment. “Our relationships within the communities we serve are very important,” says Ms. Otero. She adds, “the Mexican Consulate is a great partner. They help us to do more than just prevention; they help us to follow through.”

### **About Ventanilla de Salud**

A video on VDS is available for viewing at: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP\\_4ZURLDn8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP_4ZURLDn8)

### **About the UNM Cancer Center**

The UNM Cancer Center is the Official Cancer Center of New Mexico and the only National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center in the state. One of just 67 NCI-designated cancer centers nationwide, the UNM Cancer Center is recognized for its scientific excellence, contributions to cancer research and delivery of medical advances to patients and their families. Annual federal and private funding of over \$65 million supports the UNM Cancer Center’s research programs. The UNM Cancer Center treats more than 65 percent of the adults and virtually all of the children in New Mexico affected by cancer, from every county in the state. It is home to New Mexico’s largest team of board-certified oncology physicians and research scientists, representing every cancer specialty and hailing from prestigious institutions such as MD Anderson, Johns Hopkins and the Mayo Clinic. Through its partnership with Memorial Medical Center in Las Cruces, the UNM Cancer Center brings world-class cancer care to the southern part of the state; its collaborative clinical programs in Santa Fe and Farmington serve northern New Mexico. The UNM Cancer Center also supports several community outreach programs to make cancer screening, diagnosis and treatment available to every New Mexican. Learn more at [www.cancer.unm.edu](http://www.cancer.unm.edu).

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