



*Mendez*  
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#### **For Immediate Release**

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#### **UNIHEALTH FOUNDATION AWARDS MNIT \$599,887 FOR THE *KIDNEY TRANSPLANT VIDEO NOVELA* PROJECT**

**MNIT partners with USC School of Pharmacy to produce an entertaining and educational video/DVD series for kidney transplant patients and their families and with the Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at USC Keck School of Medicine to conduct a scientific evaluation.**

Communication of complex health-related information to patients, especially organ transplant patients, is difficult. MNIT has a deep understanding of the challenges dialysis patients face in pursuing transplantation, especially patients with language barriers. Since 2006, NIT has provided the *One-on-One Kidney Transplant Education Program* (One-on-One Program) to dialysis patients in Los Angeles County. In both evaluating the program and feedback from the educators, we have identified the most common challenges and struggles Latino dialysis patients face in accessing and understanding transplantation.

The One-on-One Program is a unique and comprehensive education program for dialysis patients using a personalized one-on-one approach delivered by specially trained transplant recipients (peer educators). While being dialyzed, the patient receives approximately 10 sessions with a peer educator who provides information about transplantation in increments to help them gain the knowledge and understanding needed to make an informed decision about transplantation. This program teaches patients how to be active in their care and to learn about the life-long responsibility of post-transplant care. The development of this program and pilot study was funded by UniHealth Foundation.

This new grant will fund the production of a video that will consist of 10 “episodes” in a *novela* format, a popular entertainment genre in Latin America and Latino communities in the US in which a fictional story unfolds over several episodes. These episodes will coincide with the teaching sessions of the One-on-One Program. Each episode will be two to five minutes in length. The *novela* will be in English and Spanish using professional bi-lingual actors.

MNIT has partnered with the USC School of Pharmacy based on Dr. Mel Baron’s success with a series of *fotonovelas* that he and his colleague Greg Molina have produced targeting the Latino community. The fotonovela format is culturally sensitive and deals with myths and misconceptions that often prevent individuals from seeking care and from following therapeutic regimens to reach care goals. Mel Baron and his team have produced several fotonovelas on various topics such as: diabetes, childhood asthma, medication compliance and dementia.

“We will produce a DVD series that makes the information understandable for those who might not get it from traditional health-education materials,” says Baron. “Our approach is engaging and entertaining,

but it also gets across the important points that will help these individuals optimize their health outcomes.”

Once produced, the *novela* will be used in the One-on-One Program and on its own at the USC Center Abdominal Organ Transplant at USC University Hospital. In addition, patients and their family members will be able to play the video at home at their leisure, and discuss the lessons and implications for the whole family group.

The grant also provides funding for an evaluation component to assess the video’s impact on viewers’ knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs about kidney transplantation. Working closely on the project is Jennifer Unger, Professor of Preventive Medicine at the Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research at USC, who has worked with Baron on many of the fotonovela projects.

This evaluation seeks to measure the impact of the video when used in conjunction with the One-on-One Program compared to being used alone. “We expect that the videos will increase the patients’ knowledge about the transplantation process including discussions with family members about donating a kidney, understanding how the waiting list works, and behavioral steps toward obtaining a transplant” says Unger. “The videos will be a resource that patients and family members can consult together and that ultimately improves health outcomes among transplant patients from diverse population groups.”

The evaluation will also seek to evaluate family members learning to be effective caretakers. “The Latino culture has the tremendous strength of the ‘familia’ and we believe the video will help family members learn how to be the effective caretakers who are critical for the success of a transplant. In fact, having a support system in place is a criterion for being accepted as a transplant candidate,” says Nicole Pinkerton, Director of Development & Education at MNIT.

“Since 2001, UniHealth Foundation has supported MNIT’s efforts to increase public awareness about the risk factors and treatment options for end-stage renal disease”, says Mary Odell, President of UniHealth. “We believe this innovative partnership for the Video *Novela* project will result in a new and exciting resource for conveying healthcare information to very sick patients in a user-friendly format.”

“This grant is a committed collaboration”, says Pinkerton. “We are excited to have partnered with the School of Pharmacy and Institute for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Research at USC as they have experience and success with developing *novela* genre educational materials. The evaluation component will be valuable in that we will be able to determine the optimal way to share the video *novela* with ESRD patients throughout the nation. We are grateful to UniHealth Foundation for their exemplary support throughout the past 10 years. MNIT’s community and patient education programs have developed with this tremendous support of UniHealth.”