



## CONNECT Annual Meeting September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Austin, TX

Thank you to all who joined our recent CONNECT Annual Meeting! This September, CONNECT brought together partners from across Texas to advance colorectal cancer prevention and treatment efforts. The meeting featured updates on statewide screening initiatives, current colorectal cancer trends in diagnosis and care, and progress in treatment access. Experts shared insights on leveraging data resources like the Texas All Payor Claims Database and highlighted innovative programs funded by CPRIT grantees.

Interactive roundtable discussions focused on key priorities: improving screening access, strengthening treatment networks, and engaging communities. These conversations will inform next steps as CONNECT continues to build sustainable strategies that reduce disparities and save lives.

### Partner Spotlight: Dr. Lewis E. Foxhall, MD



We're proud to highlight the leadership of Drs. Lewis Foxhall, Ernest Hawk, and Robert Bresalier in advancing colorectal cancer prevention through Project 80%, featured in the Journal of the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. This innovative initiative focuses on increasing colorectal cancer screening for uninsured and low-income Texans ages 45–75. Working in partnership with FQHCs and community clinics, staff identify eligible patients, assess their risk, and provide the appropriate screening pathway—distributing FIT for average-risk individuals or referring increased-risk patients directly for endoscopy. Mailing kits also serves as an additional screening strategy. By removing barriers and supporting clinic-driven engagement, Project 80% is increasing access to timely colorectal cancer screening—strongly aligning with CONNECT's mission statewide.



# UPCOMING EVENTS & RESOURCES



- **TACCHO Annual Public Health Conference**  
Austin TX, April 8th-10th, 2026  
<https://www.taccho.org/conferences-events-meetings>
- **Southeastern CRC Consortium**  
Charleston, SC, April 29th-May 1st, 2026  
<https://secrcconsortium.org/>
- **Get Your Rear in Gear**  
Various Dates and Locations  
<https://coloncancercoalition.org/get-involved/participate/get-your-rear-in-gear/>
- **Colorectal Cancer Alliance Events**  
Various Dates and Locations  
<https://colorectalcaner.org/get-involved/events/events>

## 2026 Spring Pilot Program Update

We are pleased to announce the upcoming release of the second round of CONNECT-funded Pilot Programs! **This initiative includes three \$20,000 grants for one-year projects aiming to improve colorectal cancer screening in Texas.** We anticipate the Request for Proposals (RFP) to be available in January 2026. More information will be posted on our website, LinkedIn, and through our network soon!

### KEY DATES

- **Submission Deadline:**  
5pm (CT) on April 15, 2026
- **Notification Date:**  
June 6, 2026
- **Project Start Date:**  
September 1, 2026

## Improving CRC Screening Through Navigator Expertise

CONNECT recently conducted a **focus group of CPRIT patient navigators to strengthen our approach to colorectal cancer screening.** Navigators play a critical role in guiding patients through the screening process, addressing barriers, and ensuring timely follow-up care. During the focus group, the navigators shared their training and education, communication modalities, equitable practices, and challenges. CONNECT staff will use the information gained from this focus group, along with established best practices to create a navigation protocol to guide care across diverse clinical settings. By incorporating navigator insights, CONNECT is building a framework that empowers healthcare teams and enhances patient experiences. This protocol will be just one of the resources available to our partners on our new website!

## Explore Our New Website!!!

- Printable CRC Resources
- Calendar of Events
- Webinars and Trainings
- And much more!

<https://research.dellmed.utexas.edu/en-us/connect>



## CONNECT Focus Groups Across Texas

The CONNECT team is conducting focus groups to better understand attitudes and educational needs related to colorectal cancer screening among newly age-eligible adults (ages 45–49). These 2-2.5 hr. discussions will gather diverse perspectives that will help shape education and outreach strategies statewide.

We've completed focus groups in Austin and El Paso, and upcoming focus groups will take place in Spring of 2026 in the following locations:

- Lubbock
- Houston
- San Antonio
- Dallas

Stay tuned for our insights from these conversations as we work together to improve colorectal cancer prevention across Texas!



## CALL TO ACTION!

### Help Us Promote the CONNECT Community Survey!

To better understand colorectal cancer knowledge and screening behaviors among Texans, CONNECT researchers are conducting a survey. We invite you to share this opportunity with your network and/or your community.

Survey participants must meet the following criteria:

- Ages 45–75
- Willing to complete a 20-25 minute survey about colorectal cancer awareness and screening plans
- Live in the state of TX

Participants will provide basic demographic information and answer questions about colorectal cancer knowledge and attitudes. Eligible participants will receive a \$20 e-gift card upon completion.

**Before participants can access the survey, they must fill out our eligibility form [here](https://redcap.dellmed.utexas.edu/surveys/?s=REECLKD3EEFYXKTC): <https://redcap.dellmed.utexas.edu/surveys/?s=REECLKD3EEFYXKTC>**

**For questions about the survey, contact:**  
**[CRCCoconnect@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:CRCCoconnect@austin.utexas.edu)**

Help us spread the word and improve colorectal cancer prevention across Texas!



# CONNECT TEAM



**Navkiran Shokar, MD, MPH**  
Project Director

[navkiran.shokar@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:navkiran.shokar@austin.utexas.edu)



**Michael Pignone, MD, MPH**  
Co-Investigator

[jmichael.pignone@duke.edu](mailto:jmichael.pignone@duke.edu)



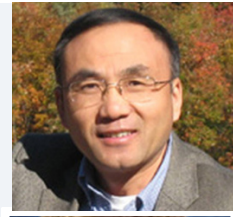
**Jessica Calderón-Mora, DrPH**  
Data & Evaluation Core Lead

[jessica.calderonmora@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:jessica.calderonmora@austin.utexas.edu)



**Jenny Spencer, PhD**  
Mace Core Lead

[jenny\\_spencer@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:jenny_spencer@austin.utexas.edu)



**Benjamin Zhan, PhD**  
MACE Co-Lead

[zhan@txstate.edu](mailto:zhan@txstate.edu)



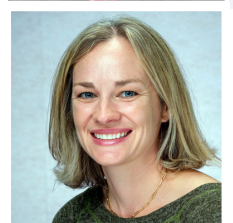
**Nicole Kluz, MPH**  
Assistant Director for Cancer Prevention Research

[nicole.kluz@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:nicole.kluz@austin.utexas.edu)



**Cynthia Chacon, MPH**  
Research Program Manager

[cynthia.chacon@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:cynthia.chacon@austin.utexas.edu)



**Laura Delfausse, MS, RDN, LD, PMP**  
Sr. Research Coordinator

[ldelfausse@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:ldelfausse@austin.utexas.edu)



**Virginia (Ginny) Mitchell, MS**  
Data Analyst

[virginia.mitchell@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:virginia.mitchell@austin.utexas.edu)



**Alexcis Mascorro, BA, CHW**  
Coordinator

[alexcis.mascorro@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:alexcis.mascorro@austin.utexas.edu)

## We'd Love To Hear From You!

If you or your organization would like submit a feature story or promote any events in our **CONNECT** quarterly newsletter, please send all submissions to our main e-mail inbox at [CRCCConnect@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:CRCCConnect@austin.utexas.edu).

