

Mexican caregivers are training at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's

Sixteen caregivers who will be on staff at Hospital Infantil Teleton Oncologia (HITO) in Mexico – including oncologists, pathologists, nurses, and other specialists – are spending three to six months this summer and fall training with and shadowing their counterparts at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Center. In the fall, members of Dana-Farber/Boston Children's care team will travel to Mexico to assist their international colleagues as they prepare for the opening of the country's first pediatric cancer hospital on Nov. 21.

The effort is part of the Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Global Health Initiative, in which pediatric partners Dana-Farber and Boston Children's Hospital are integrating program-building, education, and research into children's cancer care in developing countries. Projects are also under way in China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, Iraq, and Rwanda.

"We have a deep commitment to partnering and sharing our multi-disciplinary model for patient care with other countries – a model that emphasizes a team approach between the physician, nurse, and pharmacist," says Dana-Farber/Boston Children's Nurse Director Kathy Houlahan, MSN, RN, who is helping to oversee the Mexico exchange and will be part of the Boston team traveling there in November. "Aside from general patient care, we're providing training in chemotherapy administration, managing patient side effects, the safe handling of agents, pain management, and palliative care."

Mariana Noriega, RN, nursing director for the Mexican hospital, came here in May and is working closely with Houlahan and others to develop the curriculum that five HITO Hospital nurses will follow for the next three months. "We have pediatric cancer care in Mexico, but nothing as focused as this, so there is much to learn," says Noriega. "One thing that is so nice to see is how much patients and families are involved with their care here; it is something I hope we can bring back home."

Noriega and her colleagues will also return to Mexico with another valuable asset. Leslie Lehmann, MD, director of Bone Marrow Transplantation at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's, is spending six months training HITO Hospital



Nurse Director Kathy Houlahan (third from right, shown here with several caregivers from Mexico) is helping oversee an international exchange program.

providers in the care of transplant patients, as well as in the policies and procedures required to get accreditation and begin performing pediatric transplants. "Once they do that, they can get on the same international database for matches that we're on," says Lehmann.

Like Houlahan, Lehmann will visit Mexico in November to help the new facility open. Dana-Farber/Boston Children's leadership is also developing a contingency plan to provide ongoing support to the staff at HITO throughout its first few years of operation.

"This has been a great collaborative effort between our two groups," says Patricia Branowicki, RN, MS, director of Nursing/Patient Services at Dana-Farber/Boston Children's. "It is allowing us a chance to advance the practice of nursing and nursing education in another country, and to build upon our own skills as teachers and colleagues." [SW](#)