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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Alianza GIST sets forth plan for strengthening  
the coalition in Latin America**

“We were energized by the meeting and now have set goals for our work in the coming year,” said Piga Fernández, Alianza GIST Coordinator. “We are heartened by our progress in bringing support to GIST patients throughout the region.”

Representatives received intensive training on the latest advances in GIST research, an overview of common pitfalls in cancer screening among radiologists and pathologists, as well as an understanding of different cancer treatments entering the market (such as generics) . A six month plan was developed to focus on Alianza GIST’s core mission areas: Education and Support, Advocacy and Access, and Research and Surveillance.

Valuable tools and programs were demonstrated to help them with their advocacy and education work in Latin America such as the online GIST course prepared by the Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey, and the LRG’s Collaborative GIST Tissue Bank and the Patient Registry.

Education, advocacy and patient-support best practices were shared by representatives from Brazil, Colombia, Chile, Mexico and Guatemala, which showed that local groups are making progress in prioritized areas this past year.

With the guidance of Bob Chapman of the American Cancer Society and Cristina Parsons Perez from Catalyst Consulting Group, Alianza GIST representatives set benchmarks to discuss and define Alianza GIST’s future working plan.

“We hope the meeting raised Alianza GIST’s profile as a seasoned advocacy organization to the next level,” said Sara Rothschild, the LRG’s Program Director.





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***About Alianza GIST:***

*Alianza GIST was formed in 2009 with the goal to improve the survival of people living with GIST in Latin America. Each year, over 5,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with GIST, a rare form of cancer, for which there is no known cure. Unfortunately, there are no statistics about the incidence of this disease in Latin America; however, research is underway to investigate the rates in the region. At present, the group is comprised of patient advocates from fifteen countries aiming to help close the gap between scientific knowledge and the clinical treatment of GIST, identify and educate more patients and key medical professionals, empower patients to take charge of their own care, and improve access to safe and effective treatments.*

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