



La Noticia De Salud

The Official Newsletter of the Connecticut Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos*

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Director's Column



It's difficult to realize that CEHDL has just become a year old! This first year has been one of the most challenging but at the same time most rewarding of my professional life. Under CEHDL's leadership the collaborations, in the area of minority health, among UConn, the Hispanic Health Council and Hartford Hospital continue to grow and are stronger than ever. CEHDL has made major inroads into its central commitment related to its research, teaching & training, and outreach mission. **This issue focuses on the central role that teaching and training play in CEHDL's mission.** During the summer CEHDL hosted 11 high school fellows some of which were based at UConn and others at the HHC. In addition the Center sponsored 6 undergraduate fellows including two nursing students from UConn. The students engaged in diverse topics including diabetes, breastfeeding and agriculture-nutrition. These projects not only offered a rich environment for the participating students, but they also expanded the CEHDL family as new partnerships were formed with Bulkeley High School, the 4-H program and the Hartford Food System. This past June, CEHDL organized its first annual conference entitled "Type 2 Diabetes and Health Disparities in Connecticut: From Research to Action." This conference was planned under the leadership of Drs. Ana Lourdes Gómez (UConn) and Debbie Humphries (HHC), with the full collaboration of Hartford Hospital, the Department of Public Health, and the Generations Clinic in Willimantic. This very successful conference highlights the role that CEHDL plays bringing together faculty, students, health care providers, community groups and state agencies to improve the state's ability to deal with complex health disparities related problems. I hope that you enjoy reading this issue!

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Save the Date: Reducing Cancer Disparities in Connecticut. CEHDL annual conference. Rome Ballroom, UConn Storrs, May 16, 2007.

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Research Core Activities

A Report on the 2006 CEHDL Annual Conference

by Ana Lourdes Gómez, PhD and Debbie Humphries, PhD, CEHDL Research Core Directors

On June 30 2006, The Connecticut Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos (CEHDL) along with their joint sponsors, the University of Connecticut College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the Connecticut Department of Public Health, the University of Connecticut Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine, Office of Continuing Education, and the Connecticut AHEC Program hosted their first annual conference in the Rome Commons Ballroom on the Storrs campus of the University of Connecticut. The conference entitled ***Type 2 Diabetes and Health Disparities in Connecticut: From Research to Action*** targeted an audience interested in issues of diabetes and/or health disparities, such as clinicians, community advocates, dietitians, researchers, diabetes educators, public health professionals, policy makers, students, and interested community members.

The day long conference packed a full schedule of diabetes topics ranging from Surveillance and Data Assessment, Peer Counseling and Cross Cultural Skills, and the Metabolic Syndrome. Eight speakers engaged the audience with presentations about the prevalence of diabetes in the state of Connecticut, cross cultural awareness, and dietary and exercise approaches to the metabolic syndrome, a precursor to Type 2 Diabetes.

The day began with an introduction from CEHDL's Director, Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, PhD and was followed by a welcome and opening inauguration from the Connecticut Department of Public Health's Chief Planning Branch Director Meg Hooper, MPA. The keynote presentation was given by Edith C. Kieffer, MPH, PhD, from the University of Michigan covering her extensive work in Community-based participatory research (CBPR), a collaborative process that equitably involves all partners in the research and recognizes the unique strengths that each brings. Dr. Kieffer spoke of her involvement in CBPR interventions that have been designed to reduce barriers for diabetes self-management in minorities through such programs as the REACH Detroit Partnership.

The topics of surveillance and data assessment were covered by Betty C. Jung, RN, MPH, CHES, and Diane Aye, MPH, PhD both from the Connecticut Department of Health. Ms. Jung spoke of diabetes prevalence data in Connecticut, reporting that in Connecticut 6% of the population has been diagnosed with diabetes mellitus (DM), and it is the 7th leading cause of death in general for white populations, while it is the 6th leading cause of death for African Americans and Hispanics. Epidemiologist, Dr. Diane Aye lectured on the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) and improvements needed on its design to better understand health disparities in our State. Dr. Aye compared BRFSS diabetes estimates with other chronic conditions such as asthma and hypertension, which can be correlated with general demographic characteristics such as income and education. Two respondents, Merrill Singer, PhD from the Hispanic Council and Dr. Pérez-Escamilla provided responses to the first sessions presentations. Kari Davis, APRN from the Generations Family Clinic, Inc. rounded out the early morning presenters with her talk about diabetes management software. Ms. Davis who is well versed in the Chronic Care Model and its implementation at Community Health Organizations, provided information about how software can improve self-management allowing patients and providers to set health care goals, increase health knowledge and feelings of empowerment.

In the categories of peer counseling and cross cultural skills Dr. Kieffer responded to Judy Lewis, MPhil from the University of Connecticut's Farmington campus and Grace Damio, MS, CD/N from the Hispanic Health Council. Dr. Lewis, a well known researcher in the area of cultural skills, educated the audience about cultural factors that play a critical role in how physicians and patients view health, illness and treatment, and contribute to health disparities. Ms. Damio, spoke about her extensive involvement in peer counseling which has been acknowledged as an important strategy towards effecting behavior change and supporting positive health practices among low-income populations.

The final session on metabolic syndrome included exercise approaches given by Richard Seip, PhD from Hartford Hospital, and dietary approaches addressed by Mary Vernon, MD, FAAFP, CMD from University of Kansas, Lawrence.

The conference was designed to foster the development of creative, culturally competent and effective interventions to reduce minority health disparities by providing a forum for interaction and discussion about Type 2 Diabetes in Connecticut. Furthermore it was the intention of CEHDL to increase awareness among individuals, institutions and agencies in the state of Connecticut of the "missing links" in research opportunities, and health care access for minorities in Connecticut. This was a very successful conference in part due to the facilitated lunch discussions and the panel discussions at the end of the day.

Participants were primarily from Connecticut, although some came from Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Approximately 160 participants attended, including health care professionals, lay health care workers, academic researchers, government health department staff, community members, and students. Student participants ranged from pharmacy students to high school students. The background of the participants allowed a breadth of discussion that is not often possible at conferences.

CEHDL’s evaluations and outcomes indicated participants were very happy with the conference. A two-stage evaluation process was conducted, one completed the day of the conference and the second completed on-line.

Comments from the conference participants:

- “It was a very well-planned, interesting and informative conference. I learned a lot about type 2 diabetes and its prevalence, obstacles to care and some possible solutions.”
- “The conference provided an opportunity to meet and learn from diverse people with background and experience in diabetes and health disparities.”



Registration Table.



DPH Session.



Linda Drake leading a discussion.



Grace Damio and Jeannette de Jesús.



Hispanic Health Council interns.



Angela and other participants enjoying a great lunch.



Panel discussion.



Ana Lourdes Gómez, Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, and Debbie Humphries from CEHDL.

Working to Eliminate Childhood Lead Poisoning in Connecticut by 2010



By Ana Chambers, MPH, CHES
 Health Education Coordinator
 Connecticut Department of Public Health
 Lead Poisoning Prevention & Control Program

Childhood lead poisoning is one of the most common, yet most preventable, pediatric health problems in our country today. Children with elevated blood lead levels are at risk for many physical health, developmental, and behavior problems. Even slightly elevated blood lead levels can result in learning disabilities and diminished IQ.

Connecticut ranks among the top 15 states with the highest levels of at-risk housing, due to its large segment of housing built prior to 1950 and the large proportion of rental housing. Houses built before 1950 pose the greatest risk of lead-based paint exposure because lead was a major component in the paint of that era.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health's Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Program (LPPCP) operates with four core units, all working in specific areas of lead poisoning prevention and control:

- The Environmental Management Unit provides oversight of property remediation and abatement issues that local health departments must enforce. Unit staff includes environmental sanitarians and analysts who are experts in regulatory and statutory interpretation and are experienced lead inspectors and risk assessors.
- The Childhood Lead Unit staff includes an environmental analyst, nurse, and epidemiologist who oversee the clinical case management of lead poisoned children. They work with local health departments to ensure that children with elevated blood lead levels receive the proper care and intervention they need.
- The Data Management Unit staff includes epidemiologists who address all data issues, including the control and upkeep of the statewide Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention (CLPPP) Surveillance System, which houses approximately 700,000 lead records.
- The Education, Outreach, Media and Special Projects Unit staff includes health educators who oversee all issues pertaining to outreach, training, education of parents and families, media outreach, and the enhancement of community knowledge and awareness of childhood lead poisoning.

The LPPCP is working with its partners and local health departments across the state to eliminate this disease in the next four years. Over the past 2 years the LPPCP has embarked upon several initiatives to reach this end:

- In the spring of 2004, the LPPCP convened a statewide task force to develop a comprehensive childhood lead poisoning elimination plan to reach the 2010 goal. In August 2004, the LPPCP submitted its plan to eliminate childhood lead poisoning to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This plan is now the framework for all of the efforts of our program.
- State funds help support two regional lead treatment centers—Yale New Haven and Hartford. Several local health departments are also funded to ensure the success of their childhood lead poisoning prevention efforts.

The CT DPH has supported legislation that would require universal blood lead screening of all children at one and two years of age. The proposed legislation has not yet been enacted but will be revisited in the 2007 legislative session.

You can learn more about Connecticut's Lead Poisoning Prevention and Control Program by visiting our website at: http://www.dph.state.ct.us/brs/lead/lead_program.htm. Program staff can be reached at (860) 509-7299.

New Face at CEHDL



We welcome **Dr. Sonia Vega López** to the position of Research Associate and the Lead Study Coordinator for CEHDL's Diabetes Peer Counseling Study. Sonia did her initial postdoctoral training at the Laboratory for Atherosclerosis and Metabolic Research at UC Davis Medical Center and then at the Cardiovascular Nutrition Laboratory at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University. Her doctoral research at UConn focused on the effect of dietary soluble fiber on cholesterol and lipoprotein metabolism. Bienvenida, Sonia!

Affiliates Corner

Conferences and Meetings

Judy Lewis led a Health Disparities workshop at the meeting “Improving Social Accountability in Education, Research and Service Delivery” organized by The Network: Towards Unity for Health and the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ghent University, Belgium, September 14-16, 2006

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla was a round table speaker at the forum “Community Networks and Collaborations: Lessons Learned from National and International Experiences”. Citigroup Center Atrium, Cupey, Puerto Rico, September 27. On September 28 he spoke about “The Hispanic Family Nutrition Program (HFNP) and the Center of Excellence for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos (CEHDL)”, Department of Psychology, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras Campus. These presentations were part of the IVth Community Public Policy Conference “Networks and Collaborations: Building Solidarity in a Globalized World” organized by the Networks for Supporting the Socio-Economic Development of Community Groups, Inc.

iFelicidades!

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla was nominated and ratified to serve on the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Cancer Partnership, the CDC funded state comprehensive cancer control consortium.

Seminar Speaker

On September 15, **Ana Abraído-Lanza**, Associate Professor of Sociomedical Sciences Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health gave the CEHDL seminar “*The Latino Mortality Paradox Revisited: Is acculturation bad for your health? The seminar, attended to capacity, was co-sponsored and hosted by UConn’s Puerto Rican and Latin American Cultural Center (PRLACC).*”



Erratum

In the “New Publications” section of the Summer ’06 issue we reversed the order of the authors in one of the references listed. The correct reference is:

Janie Simmons and **Merrill Singer**. I Love You ... and Heroin: Care and Collusion among Drug-using Couples. *Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention, and Policy* 1(7), 2006

The CEHDL Farm/Nutrition Education Project

By Merrill Singer, PhD-Hispanic Health Council

“You know, I just realized that we planted the vegetables, and grew the crops, and now we are selling them at the market. That’s pretty cool!” These are the words of Iliana Rodriguez, one of six Bulkeley High School Students from Harford who participated this summer in CEHDL’s Farm/Nutrition Education Project. The other students enrolled in the program were Christian Alvarado, Jose A. Diaz, Diana P. Millan, Isimar Rodriguez and Lizmarie Bolorin. The project was based on a collaboration of CEHDL with Bulkeley High School, GROW Hartford, and the 4-H Program, and was coordinated by the Hispanic Health Council.

The purpose of the program was to assist young Latinos to begin thinking about health and nutrition-related careers. The program provided participants with hands on experience and knowledge about the role of food in health, including where food comes from and how it reaches the consumer, but also about nutrition facts, the political and social issues involved in diet and nutrition, and the causes and consequences of poor diets. In addition to talks and discussions of key issues, the six student participants gained real life experience by working in community gardens, engaging in preparing

(continued on page 6)

(The CEHDL Farm/Nutrition Education Project continued from page 5.)

nutritious meals, assisting with the farmer's market, and visiting food-related sites in Connecticut.

According to Shannon Raider, Program Director of GROW Hartford (part of the Hartford Food System), who worked directly with the students, "I feel we have some dedicated kids and a committed coordinator... They ask great questions and have good attitudes." The program was coordinated by Glenn Fields. At GROW Hartford, the students harvested over 700 pounds of fresh produce and through their work at the farmer's market they earned over \$600 for the non-profit farming program.

Everyone who worked with the high school students was impressed by their commitment, creativity, and hard work. According to Matt Antonelli, a CEHDL college intern who helped with the evaluation of the summer farm program, "There aren't great academic and extra curricular activities for every school and these kids are examples of how good kids can come from poor surroundings. One of the girls I had a chance to talk to is in a health program at her high school and hopes to go to UConn and become a doctor. It was impressive to me for this young girl, not even a senior yet, to know exactly what she wants to do with the rest of her life." Kathy Marulanda, another CEHDL college intern who participated in the evaluation noted, "I think this program is having a positive effect on the kid's eating habits and getting them to make smarter and healthier decisions."

In addition to the hands-on components of the program, the students also participated in several educational presentations. One of the issues of was helping the students get a better understanding of how the food system works in American society. Toward session in which the students were about where food they eat is grown, again to consumers. The students knowledge of geography. Next the of the various components of the about the differences between

"You know, I just realized that we planted the vegetables, and grew the crops, and now we are selling them at the market. That's pretty cool!" said Iliana Rodriguez.

concern to the farm project, for example, understanding of how the food system that end, Shannon Raider led a training asked a series of True/False questions sold at the wholesale level, and then sold found that this quiz challenged their students helped Shannon in making a list food system, after which she taught them conventional and sustainable agriculture.

In their self-evaluations of the program, the students uniformly felt that one of the best components was having Glenn Fields as the coordinator. It was evident throughout the project that Glenn bonded well with the students and they, in turn, respected his leadership. The students also reported that they enjoyed the other participants in the program, the field trips they took with Glenn, and getting to do new things. The students were less enthusiastic about some of the food they prepared for lunch, as it sometimes involved agricultural products they were not used to eating, and about working on the farms on hot days. Nonetheless, most of the students reported that involvement in the program made them think more carefully about the foods they eat. Additionally, the program, they said, stimulated them to be curious about things they did not know much about before.

The students completed the program on August 18th with a graduation ceremony at the Hispanic Health Council. While like all new programs, the project had its challenges, it was evident at the graduation that all of the students and the adults from all of the participating organizations felt that the Farm/Nutrition Education Project was a very successful CEHDL initiative.



Harvesting at the farm.



Mapping the Garden.



Working in the garden..



CEHDL-HSSRAP Summer Fellows

by Rafael Pérez-Escamilla & Sheila Taylor

During the summer CEHDL sponsored and hosted four outstanding high school students to work on a diabetes project as part of the University of Connecticut's High School Student Research Apprentice Program (HSSRAP). For six weeks Eduardo Carreto and Lourdes Zapata from East Catholic, Joshua Freeman from East Hartford, and Deaci-Ann Wallen from Bulkeley benefited from a comprehensive program involving classroom instruction, hands on research activities, and field trips. Students were identified with great assistance and collaboration from UConn Health Center's Health Career Opportunity Programs (HCOP) led by Drs. Marja Hurley and Hubert Benitez.

Highlights included:

- Interactive nutrition, physical activity, and diabetes lectures from Professor Pérez-Escamilla, Ms. Sheila Taylor, Dr. Ana Lourdes Gómez, doctoral student Amber Hromi-Fiedler, and nutritional sciences faculty including Professors Richard Clark, Maria-Luz Fernández, and Donna Chapman
- “Super Size Me” documentary viewing and discussion
- Participation in CEHDL's first annual conference on diabetes
- Field trips to the Hispanic Health Council and the Connecticut Department of Public Health in Hartford
- Nutritional assessment laboratory led by doctoral student Angela Bermúdez-Millán
- Nutritional sciences lipids laboratory experience
- Kinesiology human performance laboratory experience
- Tracking and analysis of their diets while on campus and at home (before and after introducing healthy diet changes based on the USDA MyPyramid Plan).

Throughout the six weeks, the students worked intensively on a team presentation entitled “Diabetes: A Crippling Epidemic” which was brilliantly presented at their graduation event in Farmington. This presentation included a description of the biology, epidemiology, risk factors, and solutions to the type 2 diabetes epidemic that is severely affecting low income minority groups in the country. The students concluded their presentation with the following remarks which sum up the success of this experience:

“My colleagues and I acquired a large quantity of knowledge about diabetes over the last six weeks. In the beginning most of us only knew that diabetes involved high glucose levels in the body. We did not know about the glucose-insulin relationship, the different types of diabetes, or how detrimental the disease essentially was. This program made us aware of how serious this epidemic is, and that through research and cooperation, we can work together to solve the problem.”



CEHDL-HSSRAP interns
hard at work.



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CEHDL's mission is to contribute to the elimination of health disparities among Latino(a)s through the formation of human resources, community-based research, and culturally appropriate outreach/extension.

WE'RE ON THE WEB!

GO TO WWW.CEHDL.UCONN.EDU



Hispanic Health Council



University of Connecticut



Upcoming Events



- ▶ **Eliminating Racial & Ethnic Health Disparities by 2010: Moral & Economic Imperatives. 5th New England Regional Minority Health Conference. Foxwoods Conference Center, Mashantucket, CT. April 2, 3 & 4, 2007. Register at www.NERMHC.com or call Michelle Surdoval at 207-839-6381.**

We want to hear from you!

We would like to hear your feedback or suggestions about this newsletter. Also be sure to please keep us posted on any news you wish to share in this newsletter. Please contact Shannon Haynes (shannon.haynes@gmail.com).

New Feature!

CEHDL's Diabetes Conference can now be streamed from www.ctn.state.ct.us. (To stream the conference, first click on "Watch Archived CT-N Videos" on CT-N's main page, then click on the letter "D". Lastly click on "[Type 2 Diabetes and Health Disparities in CT Conference](#)".)