



Minority Health and Health Disparities

Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene



September 2007 Newsletter

Our Vision:

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene envisions a state in which health care services are organized and delivered in a manner designed to eliminate health disparities among its ethnic and racial populations, thereby leading the way to a healthy Maryland in the New Millennium.

Our Mission:

In fulfillment of the Department's mission to promote the health of all Maryland citizens, the Health Disparities Initiative shall focus the Department's resources on eliminating health disparities, partner with statewide organizations in developing policies and implementing programs and monitor and report the progress to elected officials and the public. The target ethnic/racial groups shall include African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans.

Maryland's Fourth Annual Health Disparities Conference

The Maryland 4th Annual Minority Health and Health Disparities Conference, sponsored by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), was a great success. This year's conference spanned two days, April 23rd and 24th, and included over 700 participants from around the state. The title of day one was "Cultural Competency: An Agenda for Ending Health Disparities in Maryland" and was sponsored by the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities. Day two was titled "Workforce and Cultural Diversity: A Public Health Forum" and was sponsored by the Maryland State Council on Cancer Control and the Maryland Comprehensive Cancer Control Plan. The conference was held at Martin's West in Baltimore.

Cultural competency and workforce diversity are growing concerns in Maryland. Minority health professionals continue to be under-represented in the health workforce even as the state's population becomes more diverse. The



conference stressed the pivotal role that a diversified health care workforce has in eliminating health disparities.

Importantly, cultural competency training of existing health care providers was a focal point of the presentations throughout the two days.

Conference speakers represented a range of academic and community organizations,

including Dr. Donald E. Wilson, Dean Emeritus of the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Other featured speakers included Dr. Robert Like, Director for Healthy Families and Cultural Diversity at the UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School and



Thomas E. Perez, Secretary of the Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation. Another highlight of the conference was a Dean's Panel featuring Dr. E. Albert Reece, Vice President for Medical Affairs and Dean of the University of Maryland School of Medicine; Dr. Larry W. Laughlin, Dean of the F. Edward Hébert School of Medicine, Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences; and Dr. Janice E. Clements, Professor and Vice Dean for Faculty at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Jordan J. Cohen, President Emeritus of the Association of American Medical Colleges moderated the discussion regarding ways in which Maryland medical schools can increase minority participation in medical education programs.

Secretary John M. Colmers of DHMH and the honorable Delegate Shirley Nathan-Pulliam offered inspiring opening remarks. As the two-day conference came to a close, attendees expressed great appreciation for the value and quality of each of the conference presenters.

From the Director's Desk



The year of 2007 has been busy and productive for MHHD. The highlight was the successful planning and execution of the 2-day health disparities conference and public health forum as well as the publication and dissemination of the Minority Health Chartbook. New partnerships have been formed with various institutions, organizations, and groups in Maryland. MHHD gained new staff members from diverse backgrounds and experiences to add to our dynamic team. We look forward to maintaining and forming new partnerships to move Maryland forward in the elimination of minority health disparities. To learn more about our efforts to eliminate minority health disparities, please visit www.mdhealthdisparities.org.

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MHHD Project Updates

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- **The Maryland Health Disparities Chartbook (2007)** will be released in September 2007. An electronic version can be obtained at www.mdhealthdisparities.org.
- **The Minority Outreach and Technical Assistance (MOTA) Program** has begun its 8th year of funding. MOTA Grantees represent each racial and ethnic group as well as 13 jurisdictions in the state. For more information on the MOTA program please visit <http://www.crf.state.md.us/html/mota.cfm>.
- **The Workforce Diversity Initiative** has formed partnerships with 13 medical and health professional schools and 20 health professional boards on the need for cultural competency and a diverse workforce.
- **The Departmental Self-Assessment Initiative** has collaborated with 11 DHMH program offices to increase the number of disparity reduction objectives in the state Managing for Results (MFR) system.
- **The Maryland Plan to Eliminate Minority Health Disparities** was released in December 2006. To obtain an electronic version please visit the MHHD website at www.mdhealthdisparities.org.
- **MHHD maintains an e-mail distribution list** to provide individuals throughout the state with information, materials and resources related to minority health and health disparities issues. If you would like to join the MHHD e-mail list, please send your preferred contact information (including e-mail address) to khiner@dhmh.state.md.us.

Maryland's Cancer Success Story

Tobacco settlement funds have been used in Maryland to implement a Cancer Control Program. One goal of the program was to target minority populations to reduce their cancer health disparities. Beginning in FY 2000, funds were distributed to each local health department and to minority organizations throughout the state. The health departments and the minority groups were charged with working together to reach all populations with a special emphasis on reaching minorities. They focused on awareness and screening and in FY 2006, 67 percent of the nearly 8,000 persons screened were minorities.



In the five years since the inception of the targeted efforts within the CRFP to reduce minority disparities in cancer, the difference between the age-adjusted cancer mortality rate for African Americans and Whites has been cut in half. From 2000 to 2005, the cancer mortality rate for Whites decreased by eight percent, while over the same period, the cancer mortality rate for African Americans decreased by 16 percent. This resulted in a 51 percent decrease in the difference between the mortality rates, from a difference of 44 per 100,000 in 2000 to 22 per 100,000 in 2005. The application of similar targeted disparity reduction efforts to the other conditions where health disparities exist in Maryland could result in similar reductions in those health disparities.

MHHD Leadership

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Arlee W. Gist, Deputy Director

New Resource

Think Cultural Health

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health sponsors a website titled *Think Cultural Health* (www.thinkculturalhealth.org) that provides free online courses accredited for continuing education credit as well as supplementary tools to help promote respectful, understandable, and effective care to increasingly diverse patients.

The three tools currently available include:

- **Health Care Language Services Implementation Guide** - an interactive tool that can assist healthcare organizations in planning, implementing, and evaluating language access services to better serve their limited English proficiency patient population and decrease disparities in access to healthcare.
- **A Physician's Practical Guide to Culturally Competent Care** - a self-directed educational program accredited for physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners, and pharmacists with a specific interest in cultural competency in the provision of care.
- **Culturally Competent Nursing Care: A Cornerstone of Caring** - an educational program designed specifically for nurses and is accredited by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

