The chance to collaborate on health disparities research drew nearly 80 faculty and administrators from The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and UT San Antonio to the first Health Disparities Research Forum on Sept. 12, 2008, held at the Cancer Therapy & Research Center at the Health Science Center.

Hosted by the Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at the Health Science Center and sponsored by the San Antonio Life Sciences Institute (SALSI), the forum gave voice to more than a dozen investigators working on projects ranging from chronic diseases to mental health to community-based interventions for prevention of obesity and diabetes in adults.

"Today we saw the need for a multi-systemic approach to this issue, including the need for a better understanding of the culture, more intercultural communication, and partnering with paraprofessionals," said Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, IHPR director and meeting co-chair.

Over the next year, the IHPR will continue to work with SALSI to help explore opportunities in maintaining momentum in conducting novel research in the area of health disparities.

“We have a community in great need,” Dr. Ramirez said. “It’s important for local researchers to prioritize the issues where we can really make a difference in South Texas.”

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— Dr. Amelie G. Ramirez, IHPR director and meeting co-chair

Hosted by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio
Sponsored by the San Antonio Life Sciences Institute, Sept. 12, 2008
Health Disparities Research Forum Addresses Disparities Challenges

State Demographer of Texas Karl Eschbach, PhD, raised issues about the health challenges Texas can expect in the next 20 years in his opening talk, “Health Disparities in a Changing Texas.”

“By 2030, the majority population will be Latinos, who traditionally have less schooling, less wealth and fewer jobs that provide health insurance,” said Dr. Eschbach, who also is the director of the Texas State Data Center at UTSA. “At the same time, we’ll have an aging Anglo population that will put great demands on the Medicare system.”

Currently, 30 percent of the Hispanic population in Texas has no health insurance, compared to 15 percent of African Americans and 12 percent of Anglos, he said. Among non-U.S. citizen Mexicans, 62 percent lack health insurance.

Texas is projected to have an overall state population growth of up to 55 million by 2040 – half from growth, half from migration. Dr. Eschbach spoke of the “complex field” of health disparities – race, gender, social class, border issues, and immigrant status – and the profound disparity in Texas regarding access to health care.

Researchers were encouraged to consider the following factors when undertaking investigation into disparities: understanding and acknowledging the complexity of the causes, recognizing the context of state policymaking and focusing on disparities where scientific knowledge can improve population health.

The San Antonio Life Sciences Institute (SALSI) was designed to facilitate collaborative activities between The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio and UT San Antonio that would lead to the overall enhancement of their research, teaching and service missions. One of its objectives is to develop synergies in research and education that would exceed the combined efforts of these institutions than if each were to act alone.

SALSI was authorized by the 77th Texas Legislature through House Bill 1716 and its companion Senate Bill 728, but no funds were appropriated. Recognizing the importance of this collaboration, UTHSCSA and UTSA invested $4.5 million in SALSI in 2003.

Its accomplishments include funding 22 research and three education awards, resulting in more than $5.5 million in extramural funding and more than 90 published research papers to date.

SALSI has been a model for Texas for interactions between a health component and an academic institution. Funds are being requested from the 81st legislative session to establish SALSI as a permanent ongoing entity that will further build upon the synergies between these two institutions to develop joint education, research and other programs.

Visit the Web site at http://research.uthscsa.edu/salsi.shtml
**Behavioral Risk Factors**

**Tina Zawacki**, PhD  
Assistant Professor, UTSA  
*Sexual Health Risk Behavior*  
“The HIV rate for Latinas is four times that of Non Hispanic White women. My research aims to decrease this health disparity by delineating the roles of relationship violence history and alcohol in Latinas’ sexual risk behavior. Results inform intervention programs addressing HIV and violence risk reduction among Latinas.”

**Carlos Jaen**, MD, PhD  
Professor and Chair, Family and Community Medicine, UTHSCSA  
*The Center for Research in Family Medicine and Primary Care: Health Behavioral Interventions*  
“There is a very short window for behavioral counseling in primary care. Other members of the team, such as medical assistants, can be helpful counseling for tobacco cessation, healthy diet, and physical activity.”

**Oralia Bazaldua**, PharmD  
Associate Professor, Family and Community Medicine, UTHSCSA  
*Use of Antibiotics Without a Prescription in a Flea Market Population*  
“One of my biggest interests is appropriate medication use. Researchers have established a direct relationship between antibiotic use and the development of resistance. The CDC has called antibiotic resistance the most pressing health problem in the world. In the United States, almost two million people get an infection in a hospital each year and nearly 90,000 die. Many factors affect antibiotic resistance including inappropriate use by patients. We hypothesize that antibiotics are being obtained from flea markets without a prescription, but we don’t know the extent.”

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**Maternal and Child Health**

**Bryan Bayles**, PhD  
Assistant Professor, UTHSCSA  
*Alternative Medicine in Maternal and Child Health: Trends and Opportunities*  
“Fifteen million Americans use dietary supplements along with prescription medication. This project seeks to explore the prevalence, patterns and predictors of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) use among Latinas during pregnancy and the postpartum.”

**K. Jill Fleuriet**, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, UTSA  
*Anthropological Perspectives on Latina Prenatal Care and Birth Outcomes*  
“Anthropology looks at how sociocultural, economic, and political processes shape the individual experience of health or health care disparity, a group’s risk for disparities, and interventions to reduce disparities.”

**Sara Gill**, PhD  
Associate Professor, School of Nursing, UTHSCSA  
*Mother/Infant Feeding*  
“Research projects include ‘Black American Breastfeeding Beliefs.’ The aim of this study was to identify low-income black American beliefs and attitudes about breastfeeding.”

**Delia Saldana**, PhD  
Associate Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UTHSCSA  
*Effective Multi-disciplinary Preventive Interventions for Latina Adolescents*  
“Project MAS – Mothers & Schools: This five year study involves 720 high school, primarily Hispanic pregnant students from a large public school district to compare dose of intervention services aimed at increasing academic, parenting and vocational goal attainment. Ninety teen fathers and the infants’ grandparents will also be recruited to participate.”
Four Health Disparities Research Forum Panels Explore Diverse Topics, Disciplines

**Chronic Diseases**

Carrie Jo Braden, PhD  
Associate Dean for Research, School of Nursing, UTHSCSA  
*Learned Response to Chronic Illness Experience*  
“My program of research focuses on learned response to chronic illness experience. I serve as consultant on several additional studies in this country and other countries that have tested or are testing the intervention with persons diagnosed with chronic pain, HIV, hypertension and osteoarthritis.”

Hector Gonzalez, MD, MPH  
Director of Health, City of Laredo, Texas  
*Texas-Mexico Border Environmental Health Assessment and Training of Health Providers*  
“The border has outgrown its infrastructure and is an international border (Central Americans and Asians are waiting to cross). About 40-50 percent of the border population is under 18. Laredo has one of the highest TB morbidity rates in Texas, but is growing its own programs and professionals to meet the current, emerging and new public health challenges.”

Zenong Yin, PhD  
Loretta J. Lowak Clarke Distinguished Professor in Health and Kinesiology, Department of Health and Kinesiology, UTSA  
*School and Community-Based Intervention for Prevention of Obesity and Diabetes in Children and Adults*  
Dr. Yin presented ongoing research projects addressing health disparities in the College of Education and Human Development at UTSA. These projects focus on the prevention of obesity and diabetes in minority children, adolescents, and adults in school and community settings via lifestyle change (physical activity and diet) and innovative school health curriculum.

**Mental Health**

Ephrem Fernandez, PhD  
Professor, Psychology Department, UTSA  
*Emotional Vital Signs*  
“Emotional vital signs include anxiety, depression, and anger. These are part of the biopsychosocial etiology of cardiovascular disease, and they may also be sequelae in cancer, HIV/AIDS, and diabetes. Certain sociodemographic factors interact with these vital signs, revealing areas in special need of clinical attention.”

Jodi Gonzalez, PhD  
Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry, UTHSCSA  
*Mental Health Treatment: Attitudes and Preferences across Ethnicity*  
“There are very few studies on illness course and outcome in bipolar disorder in U.S. ethnic groups. Are there differences across ethnic groups? If so, what are they? How does cultural background play a role, if any, in illness expression, mental health treatment attitudes, preferences and outcomes?”

Dawn Velligan, PhD  
Professor/Co-Director, Division of Schizophrenia, Department of Psychiatry, UTHSCSA  
*Psychosocial Treatment and Functional Outcome in Schizophrenia*  
This National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) project examines interventions to improve functional outcomes and persistent symptoms in schizophrenia. It compares the efficacy of four psychosocial treatments in schizophrenia: cognitive behavior therapy, cognitive adaptation training, multi-model-cognitive therapy and medication follow-up as usual. Another NIMH study is focused on interventions for adherence to oral antipsychotic medications in schizophrenia.
About Our Host

Institute for Health Promotion Research

The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio researches the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and chronic disease affecting residents of South Texas, Texas and the nation to improve the health of all while serving as a national model for health promotion research and education. The IHPR is directed by Amelie G. Ramirez, DrPH, professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the Health Science Center. Kipling J. Gallion, MA, is the deputy director.

The IHPR was established on Oct. 1, 2006, as a unit of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the School of Medicine at The UT Health Science Center at San Antonio, but the IHPR leadership has been conducting research since the early 1980s, starting with a program called Salud En Acción, which united experts to research the similarities and differences of the Hispanic/Latino community. Researchers have since been involved with more than 100 funded projects aimed at improving Hispanic/Latino health in the following research areas:

- Hispanic/Latino health disparity research, education and training
- Health promotion, communication and policy research
- Community-based interventions and patient navigation programs
- Cancer control, prevention and risk factors
- Tobacco control and prevention
- Mental health and prevention
- The IHPR also has conducted projects in these areas: clinical trials, genetic testing, energy balance and childhood obesity.

For more information, visit our Web site at http://IHPR.uthscsa.edu.

Goals:
- Assess/analyze the causes, nature and magnitude of health disparities
- Test and evaluate disparity-reducing effects of behavioral, psychological and policy interventions
- Educate the community to improve health outcomes
- Train healthcare workers in scientific advances and practical strategies

Functions:
- Develop, test and implement research, education, intervention and outreach projects
- Train scientists and mentor students
- Communicate with research, health, policy and community groups using IHPR-developed channels, including Web sites, news releases, public service announcements, newsletters, educational publications and campaigns, peer-reviewed journals, national reports, impact statements, media interviews and an online directory of bilingual cancer experts

About this Report

This SALSI Conference Report was produced by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. Please send comments to IHPR@uthscsa.edu.

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The Institute for Health Promotion Research (IHPR) is part of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics in the School of Medicine at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio. The IHPR is supported in part by the Health Science Center and its Cancer Therapy & Research Center and Regional Academic Health Center. The IHPR investigates the causes and solutions to the unequal impact of cancer and other chronic diseases among the populations of South Texas, Texas, and the nation.