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Winter 2004

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## 4th Annual Binational Meeting held in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico

The 4th Annual Binational meeting of the Commission was held in Saltillo, Coahuila, on December 11 and 12, 2003. The meeting was presided over by the Commissioners Tommy Thompson, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services, and Mexico's Secretary of Health Julio Frenk Mora. One of the highlights was the



*Mexico Secretariat of Health Dr. Julio Frenk Mora (left) and U.S. Secretary of Health Tommy Thompson at the 4th Annual Binational Meeting in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico.*

joint signing of a letter of intent to increase cooperation in drug abuse research programs and exchange materials and scientific professionals. This agreement will build upon previous binational activities between the United States and Mexico and will be carried out through the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and Mexico's National Council Against Addictions (CONADIC).

Each Secretary attended a breakfast meeting with their respective sections. Secretary Thompson was briefed by U.S. Section members on border health priorities followed by a question and answer session.

Following the presentation of the color guard for the two countries and welcoming

*(continued on page 3)*

## Secretary Thompson announces funding for EWIDS program

At the USMBHC's 4th binational meeting in Saltillo, Mexico, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson announced the awarding of \$5.4 million in funds to the Commission to enhance early infectious disease surveillance capabilities in the six Mexican border states along the U.S.-Mexico border.

The Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) program, which will be implemented over a three-year period, will focus on early detection, identification and reporting of infectious diseases associated with both potential

bioterrorism agents and other major threats to public health.

"Disease and illness recognize no political boundaries and that's why it's imperative that our countries continue to work together to safeguard the health of those along both sides of the border," Secretary Thompson said. "Early warning surveillance and prompt sharing of those findings is a public health and national security imperative for both nations."

The Commission, in consultation with the Mexico Secretariat of Health and the U.S. Department of Health and Human

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## Planning begins for U.S.-Mexico Binational Health Week

### *Families on the Move to Improve Health*

The Commission hosted an initial planning meeting for the U.S.-Mexico Border Binational Health Week on January 22, 2004 in El Paso, Texas. Personnel from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Secretaria de Salud, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), California-Mexico Health Initiative and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as Commission members and outreach office personnel, joined members from the Pan American Health Organization, border state health offices, and other entities interested in border health, in taking this

important first step in making the Border Binational Health Week a reality.

The Border Binational Health Week, slated to be held the third week of October, is an initiative that is being championed by the secretaries of health from both nations, the Commission and HRSA. The goals of the Border Binational Health Week are to heighten border communities' awareness of health and health services, and to foster activities that improve health. The USMBHC's Healthy Border 2010 program will serve as a framework for the week's activities, which will take place in the majority of the sister cities along the border.

Dr. Elizabeth Duke, HRSA administrator, and her senior staff, and Kristen McCall, from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Office of Global Health, participated in the meeting via video conference. Dr. Duke announced that HRSA was providing a \$150,000 grant to match the Commission's funding of this event.

Central and regional steering committees were formed and a planning structure and timeline were prepared. The next planning meeting for the health week is scheduled for February 19, 2004.



*Attendants of the first planning meeting for the U.S.-Mexico Binational Health Week held in El Paso, Texas. Top, left to right: Dr. Federico Saracho, Arq. Fernando Sepulveda, Eva Moya, Capt. Epi Elizondo, Dr. Jaime León Varela.*

### **EWIDS Program** (continued from page 1)

Services, will develop a funding allocation formula for the administration of these funds.

The goals of this ambitious program are to support collaborative activities with the six Mexican border states in order to develop compatible surveillance systems in both countries.

Planning efforts of the EWIDS program will be linked to ongoing planning activities of the U.S. border states. State health officers and bioterrorism coordinators in the four U.S. border states

will also be involved in the planned scope of work to ensure that the strategic planning is done in a coordinated, binational manner.

### **Farewell and Thanks**

The Commission bids farewell to Dr. Diana Bonta, who was the California Commissioner for three years. Dr. Bonta's support and leadership in the California-Baja California region will be sorely missed. The Commission extends its thanks for her years of service and dedication to the USMBHC and wishes her the best.

remarks by Dra. Bertha C. Castellanos, Secretary of Health of the state of Coahuila, the annual meeting was inaugurated by the Governor of Coahuila Enrique Martínez y Martínez.

New members for the Commission were introduced and Dr. Laurance Nickey was named Lifetime Advisor by Secretary Thompson. Executive Directors Eva Moya and Arq. Fernando Sepúlveda presented the highlights of the Commission for 2003 which included: Healthy Border 2010 Program activities; Border Models of Excellence replication efforts; Binational TB Card project progress; Terrorism and Public Health Preparedness vertical planning efforts; and information technology Infrastructure improvements.

Other presentations included the upcoming core Commission activities for 2004, which included:

- Public Health Infrastructure and Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance Project (EWIDS);
- Border Binational Health Week and Immunization Weeks of the Americas;
- Road Safety and Injury Control Binational Conference – World Health Day; and
- Strategic partnerships and alliances.

Texas Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Eduardo Sanchez spoke to the Commissioners on behalf of the U.S. Section and asked for their assistance with a prompt resolution to facilitate the movement of specimens, medication and equipment across the border. Secretary Thompson committed to scheduling a meeting with Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge to address this concern, and asked the Office of Global Health Affairs and the U.S. Section Executive Director to take the leadership in establishing communications and coordinating efforts.

Other concurrent sessions and events that occurred during the two-day event included:

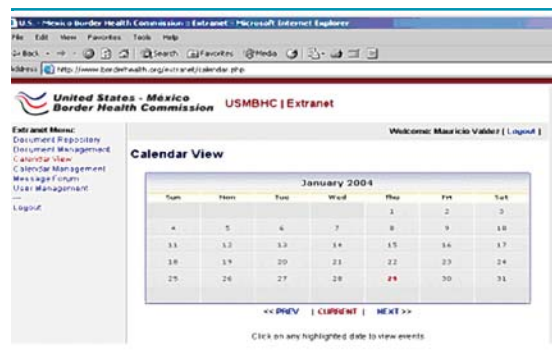
- A working meeting of the EWIDS project team;
- Healthy Border standing committee;
- Public health infrastructure ad hoc workgroup; and
- U.S.-Mexico Binational Commission core groups and co-chairs.

A media conference was also held, where Secretary Thompson announced the awarding of \$5.4 million in funds to the Commission. The funds will be used to enhance early warning capabilities to identify both naturally occurring infectious diseases and potential bio-terrorism threats.

## Commission's New Extranet

The Commission is finalizing work on the development of a web accessible extranet to improve communication among the Commission members. The USMBHC extranet will provide online tools such as a calendar, document repository, and an area for electronic discussion forums that will relate to specific issues pertaining to the business of the Commission.

The goal of the extranet is to improve information sharing and to implement a document management process that will



reduce paperwork and document duplication. The site will be accessible via password and will be available on February 15, 2004.

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## Upcoming Dates

Working Without Borders to Stop TB  
February 26-28  
Austin, Texas

•  
World Tuberculosis Day  
March 24

•  
World Health Day  
April 7

•  
U.S.-Mexico Border Binational Conference on Transportation/Roadway Safety  
April 14-16

•  
Commission Meeting in El Paso, Texas  
April 22-23

•  
Immunization Week of the Americas  
April 25-30

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For details visit our web site at:  
[www.borderhealth.org](http://www.borderhealth.org)



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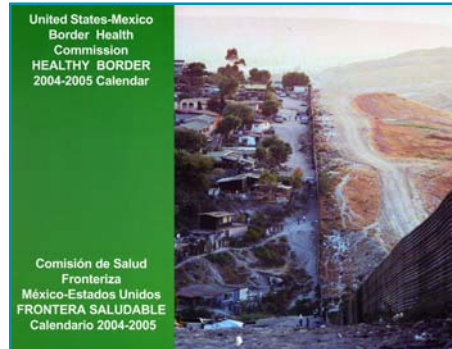
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[www.borderhealth.org](http://www.borderhealth.org)  
or at  
[www.saludfronteriza.org](http://www.saludfronteriza.org)

### Mission Statement

*To provide international leadership to optimize health and the quality of life along the United States-Mexico Border.*

## Quarterly Highlights

- The first **Healthy Border 2010 Calendar**, produced by the Migrant Health Education Initiative of California, was unveiled at the Annual Binational Meeting in Saltillo, Coahuila, Mexico. This health promotion tool is intended to provide basic health education messages on key priority issues of the region. The calendar is part of a series of health promotion strategies for the U.S.-Mexico border. To date, 5,000 copies of the calendar have been distributed. The U.S. DHHS Office of Minority Health has offered to reprint the calendar.
- The Commission has developed a new organization and planning tool to assist in their ongoing work. A **Healthy Border 2010 2004 Calendar of Core Activities and Initiatives** has been laid out in a circular format that provides an at-a-glance view of the year's upcoming activities, initiatives and meetings.
- **Eva Moya** and **Arq. Fernando Sepulveda**, executive directors of the U.S.



and Mexico Sections, attended the 20th meeting of the **U.S.-Mexico Binational Commission** on Nov. 12 in Washington, D.C. The meeting, hosted by the Department of State, provided a forum for U.S. Government cabinet secretaries and agency heads, along with their Mexican counterparts, to discuss immigration, foreign policy, homeland security and border cooperation,

among other topics. Moya and Sepulveda participated in a working group on homeland security and border cooperation.

- **Dr. Catherine Torres** (New Mexico), **Eva Moya** and **Eva Margarita Solórzano**, Mexico's Healthy Border manager, and Lic. Piedad Huerta, from the El Paso Field Office, participated in the Pan American Health Organization's Preparatory Workshop for the 2004 Vaccination Week in Quito, Ecuador, on Jan. 28-30. The Commission members were involved in the organization meetings for the Immunization Weeks of the Americas in the border region, which will take place April 25-30.

## Commission visit to Washington D.C.

Eva Moya, executive director of the U.S. Section, had a productive three-day visit to Washington, D.C. in mid January. Ms. Moya was joined by Dr. Paul Villas, Texas Commissioner, for the first two days.

Among their various activities, Ms. Moya and Dr. Villas met with the Dr. Nathan Stinson, Director of the Office of Minority Health (OMH), and his staff to discuss current and upcoming Commission projects, and participated in an Inter-Agency Action Team meeting on Border Health, which included members from several Health and Human Services agencies and federal departments.

Ms. Moya had several productive meetings with the staff of key border Senators Hutchison, Cornyn and Bingaman. She also met with the staff of the Office of Women's Health to discuss a possible conference on border women's health.

Ms. Moya also attended the International Stakeholders Meeting on World Health Day, and discussed the Commission's role and support in the Border Binational Conference on Road and Traffic Safety.

The visit concluded with a meeting with the staff of Representative Hinojosa.