The Binational Health Council Strategic Planning Workshop was organized by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), Office of Border Health (OBH), in partnership with the U.S. - México Border Health Commission (USMBHC), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the U.S. - Mexico Border Health Association (USMBHA), on June 25-27, 2008, in San Antonio, Texas.

Binational Health Councils (BHCs) were established under the auspices of USMBHA as sister-city forums for prioritizing and addressing border health issues in a collaborative manner among member organizations. BHC membership includes local and State health authorities, hospitals, community health centers, universities, and private health services providers.

Representing the U.S. Section of the USMBHC at the workshop was Dr. Tony Falcon, Texas, U.S. Section member, and Dr. Larry Kline, California, U.S. Section member. Representing the México section was Executive Secretary Clemente Villalpando.

The overall purpose of the workshop was to enhance the organizational capacity of Binational Health Councils (BHCs), analyze and discuss border health strategic priorities proposed in respective sister-city sub-regions, and to provide a forum to present local public health recommendations to border-wide organizations that have a mandate to improve border health.

Drs. Falcon and Kline served as panel members on the third day of the conference which focused on enhancing binational and border-wide communication, coordination and collaboration (“the 3 C’s”) among key organizations and institutions on both sides of the border.

The first day included an information and communications training workshop sponsored by PAHO. The second day served as a Strategic Planning Session with each of the nine binational health councils presenting and discussing the results of their respective strategic planning exercises.

The final day brought together representatives of border organizations, including Drs. Kline and Falcon, who spoke to the roles of the different

Continues on page 2
organizations and shared commentary on how to improve the 3 C’s among these border organizations, especially in response to border health priorities indicated in the nine BHC strategic plans.

The initial plan to enhance the 3 C’s strategy was discussed at a meeting of the Border Governors Health Work Table in 2005. It was agreed that a mechanism was needed to convene major border organizations with an interest in health that should be communicating, coordinating, and collaborating on a systematic basis.

This Binational Health Council Strategic Planning Workshop allowed the 3 C’s discussion to continue. “This was one of the more important border meetings as the key stakeholders were present and had a productive multi-day review of the tools and methods to improve coordination, cooperation and communication,” said Dr. Kline, “It was also concluded that similar meetings of the entire set of stakeholders should again meet at least twice a year to develop an on-going review of directions and…changes that can leverage all of the needed effort to improve health at the border.”

Paul Dulin, Director, New Mexico Office of Border Health, presented a synthesis of the nine binational health council presentations that took place on June 26, 2008. The vision and mission statements of all of the BHCs emphasized a binational approach to shared health priorities, actions and solutions to their shared binational sister-city sub-regions.

For all nine BHCs, public health priorities are categorized into two tiers: “Tier 1” priorities included: Diabetes/obesity/nutrition and Tuberculosis. “Tier 2” priorities included: Dengue fever, EWIDS/EPI, Mental health/substance abuse/domestic violence, HIV/AIDS and STDs.

Tier One priorities are considered pertinent border-wide, with actions required by all binational health councils. Tier Two priorities are more regional or sub-regional issues. The BHCs plan to collectively represent a strategic plan for the entire border that should be considered as strategic guidance for the Commission as well as PAHO, USMBHA and the Border Governors Conference.

From this synthesis arose a number of key recommendations. Mr. Dulin emphasized the council’s emphasis on the need to focus on specific health priorities, rather than trying to resolve all health issues with the same intensity, particularly because there are not enough resources. On the other hand, certain priorities are mandated by law, such as infectious diseases.

Several structural issues were seen as currently limiting the effectiveness of border health programs, including poverty, violence, and the lack of a comprehensive and equitable immigration policy. The BHCs face an increasing demand for health services in their regions, but they have static or diminishing resources.

There was general consensus that the USMBHC should focus its priorities on those of the binational health councils. The Commission should also develop binational policies and seek sustainable funding to facilitate the implementation of the activities proposed.

It was proposed that State and local health authorities validate the vision and mission of the councils, and support them as formal organizations. Participants also recommended that the Offices of Border Health in the U.S. and State Health Services of México facilitate coordination between the councils to ensure the impact and effectiveness of coordinated activities and ensure compliance with State public health mandates.
The New Mexico Office of Border Health, along with other community agencies, hosted a two-day conference at Memorial Medical Center on June 3-4, 2008, in Las Cruces, New Mexico, entitled, “Regional Conference on Diabetes and Obesity.”

The June 3rd event, called Promotoras-You are Part of the Team!, was an all-day conference full of hands-on activities designed to provide almost sixty Promotoras, Community Health Educators and Nutrition Educators with resource tools to help their patients with diabetes prevention and management.

Dr. Rosalba Ruiz Reyes-Holguin, the Binational Coordinator of the U.S.-México Border Diabetes Prevention and Control Project, presented current research that showed alarming rates of newly diagnosed Type 2 diabetes for people in the border region. She also discussed diet and exercise intervention programs being made to combat this epidemic. In addition to receiving Healthy Lifestyle tips, exercise bands, and cookbooks, participants danced and exercised using videos tailored for their bilingual, bicultural communities. As a result of this conference, the Promotoras and other health educators will be better prepared to serve patient needs for their diabetic patients.

Over one hundred nurses, doctors and researchers responsible for diabetes treatment and management in the health industry attended Day two of the conference, which was entitled Tip of the Iceberg: Diabetes and Obesity on the U.S.-México Border. Topics of discussion included the prevalence of obesity and Type 2 diabetes on the U.S.-México border. This conference was designed to bring into focus the most current research, and to serve as a springboard for further action.

For more information please contact Liz Castro, New Mexico Office of Border Health, at Lizabeth.Castro@state.nm.us or call (505) 528-5146.

The U.S.-México Border Health Commission (BHC) - México Section, was invited to participate in the awards ceremony for Historias de Migrantes [Migrant Stories] on June 25, 2008 in Mexico City. The ceremony was convened by the Instituto de los Mexicanos en el Exterior [Institute of Mexicans Abroad], the Consejo Nacional de Población, el Consejo Nacional para la Cultura [National Population Council, and the Artes y el Fondo de Población de Naciones Unidas [National Council for the Culture, Arts and Population Fund of the United Nations.]

The purpose of this writing contest was to create room for expression and provide reflection on the migratory experience and its implications on the lives of individuals, families and communities in both places of origin and destination. The winning stories can be found at http://www.ime.gob.mx.

Presented at the ceremony was the book Historias de Migrantes 2008 [Migrant Stories 2008], which contains the 14 winning stories. The book will be broadcast and distributed by the BHC during the Border Binational Health Week, which will be held October 6-10, 2008.

For more information, please contact Analicia Villanueva, Communications & Public Relations Coordinator, BHC-México Section, at avillanueva@saludfronteriza.org.mx.
The U.S. - México Border Health Commission (BHC) will celebrate the 5th Annual Border Binational Health Week (BBHW) October 6-10, 2008, in conjunction with the 3rd Mexican National Health Week and the 8th Annual Binational Health Week.

These combined celebratory events are a partnership of the BHC, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS); the México Secretariat of Health (SSA), the Health Initiative of the Americas, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the ten U.S.-México Border States; and, the United States - México Border Health Association (USMBHA).

The goal of BBHW is to promote sustainable partnerships to address border health problems. Intended outcomes include increased community and inter-agency networking relationships, increased information sharing and educational opportunities, and increased awareness of the BHC and other state and local initiatives.

This year’s Inauguration Ceremony will be in Tijuana, Baja, California, at the Cultural Center (Centro Cultural Tijuana (CECUT)), on Sunday, October 5, 2008. The Closing Ceremony will be in Piedras Negras, Coahuila at the Multimedia Auditorium 2000 (Auditorio Multimedia 2000), on Friday, October 10, 2008.

Activities during BBHW will include forums on specific health related topics and other activities sponsored by border partners, including the 3rd Annual Tobacco Policy Forum, which will be held in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México, on October 7, 2008. The forum’s main purpose is to reduce the use of tobacco along the border. Plans include presentations on tobacco health policy issues and epidemiology in the U.S. and México.

This year’s primary objective of the forum is to ensure the adoption of a Healthy Border 2020 tobacco objective, to be done by a Border Tobacco Research Group. Another objective is to develop a Binational Tobacco Network, which will serve as an opportunity to fortify bi-national collaborations that can result in progress towards tobacco prevention and control policies.

Another forum will be the Second Seminar on Workplace Safety and Health, which will be in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México, on October 9-10, 2008. Objectives of this seminar are to provide a forum for technical exchange, professional enrichment, and networking among occupational safety and health professionals in the Paso del Norte region and to foster partnerships and collaboration to improve occupational safety and health along the border.

At the first Seminar on Workplace Safety and Health in October 2007, participants heard presentations from both national and local perspectives of occupational safety and health and engaged the topic through moderated small group discussions. This year’s seminar will have a regional focus on the Paso del Norte region.

Other events planned for this year’s BBHW are the Second Annual Youth on the Border Conference in Nogales, Arizona, on October 10, 2008. The Palomas Promotora Committee Health Fair, sponsored by the New Mexico Office of Border Health, will be on in Palomas, Chihuahua, México, on October 4, 2008. Also in celebration of BBHW will be the second Tri-State Red Ribbon Rally, to be held in El Paso, Texas, on October 25, 2008.

The message of Families in Action for Health will continue to serve as the theme for the week-long celebration of BBHW.

In October 2007, BBHW activities included binational seminars on Safety and Health in the Workplace (Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua), the 2nd Annual Tobacco Policy Forum (Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua), a Binational Dengue Prevention & Control Seminar (Brownsville, Texas), the Tri-State Red Ribbon Rally (Sunland Park, New Mexico), and the Border Philanthropy Partnership Binational Community Health Meeting (Tijuana, Baja California), among numerous other local and regional activities.

During BBHW in 2007, over 11,000 residents in the United States and over 142,000 in México received a variety of health screenings or services during sponsored events. Over 300 Federal, State and local private and non-profit partners joined in the celebration of BBHW.

For additional information, please visit www.borderhealth.org.
**Rosemarie Marshall Johnson, M.D.**

Her leadership, vision, and passion have helped to identify and address binational challenges that affect the health status of the people who live along the U.S.-México border.

Before retirement, Dr. Johnson was a practicing anesthesiologist with Anesthesia Service Medical Group, Inc. on the staff of The Green Hospital and the Scripps Clinic in La Jolla, California. She was a visiting associate clinical professor in the University of California, San Diego - School of Medicine’s Department of Anesthesiology.

Among other awards, the San Diego County Medical Society honored Dr. Johnson as its Physician Member of the Year. She has served as president of the San Diego County Medical Society and the California Society of Anesthesiologists.

Dr. Johnson has been a leader in the California Medical Association, especially in the areas of community and public health. Dr. Johnson received her doctor of medicine degree from Georgetown University School of Medicine. The Commission will miss her contributions as a U.S. Section Member. We wish Dr. Johnson the very best.

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**Susan Gerard**

The United States - México Border Health Commission would like to take this opportunity to thank Susan Gerard for her service as a member of the U.S. Section of the Commission for the state of Arizona.

Gerard has served as the Director of the Arizona Department of Health Services since April 29, 2005. As state Health Director, she oversaw one of the largest departments in Arizona State Government, with a budget of more than $1 billion and a workforce of more than 1,800 employees.

The Arizona Department of Health Services is the state’s lead public health agency—responsible for protecting, maintaining and improving the health of all Arizonans. The department operates programs in behavioral health, disease prevention and control, health promotion, community public health, environmental health, maternal and child health, and regulation of childcare and assisted living centers, nursing homes, hospitals, and other health care providers. Gerard was recognized for her efforts to improve Arizona’s mental health system, providing hope for recovery to all residents with serious mental illness.

Gerard previously served as a member of Governor Janet Napolitano’s administration as a policy adviser for health care issues, assisting with crucial decisions involving state and federal budgets of nearly $8.1 billion directly linked to services for more than 1.2 million residents. Gerard also served in the state Legislature from 1988 to 2002, chairing the health committee for 10 years and earning recognition as a statewide leader on health care issues.

The Commission will miss her contributions as a U.S. Section Member. We wish Gerard the very best.
The U.S.-México Centers of Excellence (COE) Consortium: An inventory of research in the U.S.-México border region

Excerpts of an article by: Martha Medrano, MD; Alexis Padilla PhD; and Pamela DeVoe, MA

The U.S.-México Border Centers of Excellence (COE) Consortium was inaugurated in 2000 with a contract from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Bureau of Health Professions (BHP), with the purpose of defining more clearly the needs for health professionals, especially physicians, dentists, and nurses in the border region.

The Consortium core members represent seven HRSA-funded COEs in the four U.S. Border States, with the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio as the lead center. Other border area COEs participated in the planning of the research and researcher database that provides the data platform used in the present study. The Consortium core group members are the Universities of: Arizona Health Sciences Center-School of Medicine Hispanic Center of Excellence; California, San Francisco-Fresno Latino Center for Medical Education and Research; New Mexico-School of Medicine Hispanic and Native American Center of Excellence; Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center at El Paso Hispanic Center of Excellence; Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Hispanic Centers of Excellence-Medical and Dentistry; Texas Medical Branch at Galveston-School of Medicine Hispanic Center of Excellence; and Texas at Austin-School of Pharmacy Hispanic Center of Excellence.

In its second year, Consortium members undertook the Research Database Project with the goal to: (1) assess the needs and resources related to health professions research workforce capacity and diversity of HRSA funded programs; (2) address research education and training along the U.S.-México Border States; and (3) serve as a resource for other research programs and institutions with an interest in increasing the health research workforce in the region.

The main objective of the Research Database Project was to identify research projects which were targeted specifically at the health disparities areas of Cancer, Cardiovascular Disease, Infant Mortality, Immunizations, Diabetes, and HIV/AIDS in the border area.

The Consortium core members selected two reports to help define the research needs along the U.S.-México Border: Healthy Border 2010 (US-México Border Health Commission, HRSA, 2003) and the Border Health Research Agenda Council Meeting Report (PAHO, 2002). These reports were selected because they represented the work of two significant organizations with a history of collaboratively identifying health practice and research needs along the Border. The Consortium members focused on developing an inventory and database of research and research projects along the U.S.-México Border as the first step in addressing this research workforce shortage.

Consortium members targeted research institutions and entities conducting research within the geographic border areas for inclusion in the researcher and research project inventory… A total of 504 researchers of all academic ranks, and representing Schools of Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Public Health, and Pharmacy… submitted project descriptions.

As far as Degree of Researcher, the largest group had either MD (25.1%) or PhD (34.1%) degrees. As far as Academic Rank of Researcher, professors were the largest group identified, with (25.8%). The largest number of Research Projects came from the Schools of Medicine (46%). The most often mentioned department affiliation was with clinical departments such as Family and Community Medicine (10.74%). The largest source of funding was from federal agencies such as the National Institutes of Health (30.88%). The most frequent types of research methods reported were quantitative (19.97%) and Community Based Participatory Research (17.92). The largest number of project sites was reported as local (33.27%), the next largest number was binational (13.85%). The top research topic was Health Disparities (96/7.01%); with Border Health coming in fifth at (70/5.11%). Research topics representing the least researched were Geriatrics (12/.88%).

For more information, please contact Dr. Martha Medrano, Associate Dean of Continuing Medical Education, Director of Medical Hispanic Center of Excellence, University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, at medranom@uthscsa.edu or call (210) 567-0963.
To increase Maternal and Child Health (MCH) data capacity in the border region, the Border Maternal and Child Health (Border MACH) Initiative got underway at a binational planning meeting held in El Paso, Texas, in October 2007. Meeting attendees, who included national, state and local health institution reproductive health directors and other program directors, reached the following consensus at the meeting:

“There is a need to build and reinforce sustainable binational collaborative partnerships and capacity to share, maximize use and translate MCH data into actions for the benefit of communities in the Border region”.

Other recommendations, including the establishment of a binational data sharing agreement to support MCH and related programs locally, resulted from the meeting. Since October, a binational advisory committee (BAC), composed of nine national, state and local level representatives from U.S. and México public health institutions, was established to guide development of a capacity building curriculum.

The Initiative is coordinated by Dr. Jill McDonald of the MCH Epidemiology program (MCH EPI) in the Center for Disease Control’s (CDC) Division of Reproductive Health. MCH EPI, with partial support from other CDC divisions, is able to fund initial curriculum development and training activities. City MatCH, a MCH EPI funding partner, is a resource for development of the capacity-building training. The United States-México Border Health Association (USMBHA), another MCH EPI funding partner, is providing meeting logistics and planning. U.S. and Mexican national and state health agencies are supporting travel and personnel costs of planning activities.

The BAC met in Phoenix, Arizona, in March 2008, to begin to develop an action plan to further define the structure and content of the Border MACH training. BAC members also participated in a City MatCH Data Institute workshop to experience first-hand potential techniques that could be used in the Border MACH training.

Dr. Cuitlahuac Ruiz Matus, Director General of the Centro Nacional de Equidad de Género y Salud Reproductiva (CNEGySR/ DGSMI) invited Jill McDonald to México in May, 2008, to strengthen collaboration between CDC/Department of Reproductive Health (DRH) and CNEGySR, and help facilitate support of other health institutions, such as Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (IMSS) and Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública (INSP), for Border MACH.

There were also preliminary discussions around a possible data sharing agreement between the Secretary of Health and CDC that would help advance MCH in the border region.

Since March 2008, the BAC reached consensus on MCH training priorities and has sketched out a structure and content for the proposed Border MACH training. A second BAC meeting is scheduled for September 3-4, 2008 in El Paso, Texas, where the committee, sister city representatives and potential faculty will meet to finalize agendas for the workshop series, assign faculty and develop detailed work plans for remaining tasks. Special emphasis will be placed on tasks for Workshop I, which is tentatively planned for February or March of 2009. Given current resource levels, 3 pairs of sister city training teams are expected to participate in the first training workshop, with additional teams participating as more resources are identified.

For more information, please contact Dan Reyna, General Manager of the BHC-U.S. Section, at dan.reyna@hhs.gov or call (915) 532-1600.
Dr. Antonio Falcon is a family physician in Rio Grande City, Texas. He is certified by the American Board of Family Practice. He is also a Clinical Assistant Professor for the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas.

He was elected to the Starr County Hospital District Board of Directors in 1997 and served on the Texas Medical Foundation Board of Trustees from 1999-2005. He served on the state’s Nursing Facility Administrators Advisory Committee from 1997-2003 and was appointed Chair of the committee by Governor Bush in 1997-1999.

Dr. Falcon has also served as a board member and executive committee member for the Texas Medical Association Political Action Committee (TEXPAC) from 2002-2005. With more than 7,300 members, TEXPAC is the largest bipartisan political action committee in the state.

In 2004, Falcon served as a board member for HOPE (Hispanics for Opportunity, Progress and Education) and as a member for the Texas Medical Association Medicaid Committee.

Dr. Falcon is a graduate of the Baylor University College of Medicine. He was appointed a member of the U.S. Section in 2006 and is a member of the Priority Setting Committee of the BHC.

Dr. Jorge Alberto Durón Martínez is the Undersecretary of Health Regulation and Development of the State of Coahuila since December 2005.

Between 1989 and 2004, he held various positions at the Mexican Institute of Social Security (IMSS) including: Internist at the General Hospital, Region 1; Medical Assistant Director and Cardiologist of the General Hospital, Region 2; and Conflict Secretary for the National Union of Social Security Workers, Delegation 16, Section 12.

Dr. Durón Martínez was also Director and Founder of the State Center for Blood Transfusion of the Secretariat of Health of Coahuila and Chief of the Cardiology Department of the “La Concepción” Hospital Center in Saltillo, Coahuila.

His academic activities include Professor of Family Planning at the School of Medicine of the Autonomous University of Coahuila, Saltillo Unit and Professor of the Cardiology Practice at the Faculty of Medicine of the Autonomous University of Coahuila.

Dr. Durón Martínez received his medical degree from the School of Medicine of the Autonomous University of Coahuila. His studies include a specialization in Internal Medicine and Cardiology and a course in Doppler Echocardiography from the IMSS in Monterrey, Nuevo León.

Dr. Durón Martínez is a member of the Priority Setting Committee of the BHC.

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Please check our website at www.borderhealth.org for updated event information

October 6-10
5th Annual Border Binational Health Week
Info: www.borderhealth.org

October 20-21
11th Annual National Promotoras Conference and Community Health Outreach Workforce
Location: Albuquerque, NM
Info: nmchwa@yahoo.com / www.rcfbh.org