United States-México Border Health Commission
Annual Meeting Summary Report
November 7-8, 2011
Ensenada, Baja California

Providing international leadership to optimize health and quality of life along the United States-México border
SUMMARY

The U.S.-Mexico Border Health Commission (BHC) conducted its annual meeting in Ensenada, Baja California, on November 7-8, 2011, highlighting successes and defining future activities.

On November 7, 2011, the BHC convened meetings of the Planning, Program, and Coordinating Committees which focused on BHC priorities and activity updates, introduction of binational initiative updates for possible collaboration, and work plan development for 2012-2013.

On November 8, 2011, the BHC Plenary Session, co-chaired by Dr. Mary Wakefield, Administrator for the Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (Representative for the U.S. Secretary of Health Kathleen Sebelius) and Víctor Hugo López Aranda, General Director of Affiliation and Operations at the National Commission of Social Health Protection (Representative for México Secretary of Health Solomón Chertorivski), focused on BHC activity updates that included the Healthy Border 2010/2020 initiative as well as presentations on several Mexican initiatives. A tribute was also held honoring the recently deceased U.S. Section General Manager Dan Reyna.

The plenary was preceded by a business session, co-chaired by Dr. Nils Daulaire, Director, Office of Global Affairs (Delegate for U.S. Secretary of Health Kathleen Sebelius), and Dr. María Gudelia Rangel, México Secretariat of Health (Delegate for México Secretary of Health Salomón Chertorivski), during which reports were provided on the Border Health Research Work Group, U.S.-México TB Consortium, Border Binational Infectious Disease Conference, and Leaders across Borders program. Particularly positive developments are increased access to insurance and health care, reduced mortality in women’s and children’s cancers, implementation of obesity prevention programs, México’s successful use of community health worker outreach (e.g., “promotoras”), and the development of a cadre of health care professionals with specialized leadership skills.

Remaining challenges include better defining objectives and increasing the efficacy of programs and confronting obesity and its related diseases, multi-drug resistant TB, and legal and practical issues in dealing with TB-positive individuals repatriated to México from the United States.

The BHC identified that its 2012 annual meeting will be held in San Diego, California.

BHC Committee Meetings

The Planning, Program, and Coordinating committees met during the 2011 BHC Annual Meeting. The Budget Committee is scheduled to meet before February 1, 2012.

Planning Committee

New initiatives introduced included the following:

- The South Carolina Rural Health Research Center’s Border Health Research Collaborative (SCRHRC) project—identifies health issues, behaviors, and access to healthcare and preventive services among Hispanic/Latino U.S. populations along the U.S.-México border.
• The HHS National Promotores de Salud Initiative—recently launched by HHS with a long-term vision to formally recognize and institutionalize promotores de salud/community health workers as an effective workforce in providing health promotion and disease prevention outreach to underserved communities.

• The University of Arizona Binational Migration Institute’s Protocol Development for the Standardization of Identification and Processing of Undocumented Border Crossers (UBC) Bodies along the U.S.-Mexico Border project—developing protocols to count, identify, process, and handle human remains (many presumed UBCs) in the U.S.-México border counties.

• Unidos por el Arte contra el Cáncer Infantil (UNAC) childhood cancer research projects—a Mexican organization that facilitates provision of medical services to child cancer patients.

Other items discussed included 2012-2013 priorities; a consolidated U.S. and México timeline of key events and funding cycles; and a status update of the BHC-Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) Alignment.

Program Committee
Since a quorum was not present, the Program Committee is scheduled to reconvene before February 1, 2012, to review pending actions including the development of the 2012-2013 Work Plan.

Updates were provided on the following BHC activities:

• The 8th Annual Border Binational Health Week—more than 144 events that focused on health promotion and disease prevention with special emphasis on childhood obesity, diabetes, and immunizations, occurred throughout the border region, bringing together local, state, and federal partners.

• The Binational Health Councils’ Third Strategic Planning Workshop—a major outcome of this workshop, which occurred in April 2011, included the development of binational operational plans to facilitate technical and financial support from federal and states health authorities and the BHC.

• BHC Reports and Publications—main updates included the release of the 2008-2009 Annual Report in August; the completion of the 2010 Annual Report draft presented for approval during the Annual Meeting Business Session; and the increased subscription base of the E-Border Health Bulletin to nearly 2000 registrants. Participants at the meeting commented on the substantial output of the BHC over the past year, including 3 white papers, 8 event reports and proceedings, and other publications such as the review of IRB needs related to border health research.

Coordinating Committee
The Coordinating Committee discussed new initiatives presented during the Planning Committee meeting; assignment of cross-border initiatives; and intra-state coordination of binational health activities. Since a quorum was not present, the Coordinating Committee is scheduled to reconvene before February 1, 2012, to review, discuss, and approve pending actions.

Business Session
Dr. Nils Daulaire, Director, Office of Global Affairs (Delegate for U.S. Secretary of Health Sebelius), and Dr. María Gudelia Rangel, México Secretariat of Health (Delegate for México Secretary of Health Salomón Chertorivski), co-chaired the session. Updates were presented on 2010/2011 BHC activities that included the following:

• Border Health Research Work Group and Expert Panel Meeting and Forum—participants expressed interest in continuing annual meetings and including more academicians to the discussions.
• **U.S.-México Border Binational Tuberculosis Consortium**—extensive discussion centered on the development of a manual to address surveillance for follow-up and treatment of TB patients.

• **Border Binational Infectious Disease Conference**—the conference highlighted the need to encourage funding for binational surveillance and to improve electronic information sharing. Guidelines for the U.S.-México Coordination on Epidemiologic Events of Mutual Interest is projected to be signed in December. The next conference will be in Austin, Texas, in May 2012.

• **Leaders across Borders Program**—participants stressed the importance and effectiveness of the program in developing binational leaders, leadership skills and networks.

**Plenary Session**

Dr. Mary Wakefield, Administrator for the Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS (Representative for U.S. Secretary Kathleen Sebelius), and Víctor Hugo López Aranda, General Director of Affiliation and Operations at the National Commission of Social Health Protection (Representative for México Secretary Chertorivski) co-chaired the session. Dr. María Gudelia Rangel served as Mistress of Ceremonies.

Both representatives led the discussion on BHC reports that included BHC activity updates and work plan development for 2011-2012; plans for the closeout of Healthy Border 2010 and the rollout of Healthy Border 2020; and presentations of several Mexican initiatives that included Seguro Popular (México’s universal healthcare program), Camino a la Salud (Pathway to Health), and Iniciativa Cinco Pasos por tu Salud (Five Steps to Your Health). Presentations focused on childhood obesity and promoting healthy lifestyles and wellness prevention.

A posthumous tribute to Dan Reyna, former General Manager, U.S. Section, BHC, was given by Dr. María Teresa Zorrilla, Executive Secretary, México Section, BHC.

The plenary session concluded with closing remarks from both representatives who acknowledged their mutual collaboration and commitment to optimize health and quality of life on the U.S.-México border.

**Actions and Next Steps**

- Support projects, initiatives, and programs that address the BHC strategic priorities
- Refine BHC programs and initiatives based on BHC member and stakeholder feedback
- Identify future inaugural and closing venues for National Infant Immunization Week, Border Binational Health Week, and the next BHC Annual Meeting
- Identify areas to improve coordination, collaboration, and communication with partners and stakeholders