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Las Cruces, New Mexico

Providing international leadership to optimize health and quality of life along the United States-México border
For additional information, please visit the BHC website at www.borderhealth.org.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Dan Reyna, Former General Manager, U.S.-México Border Health Commission-U.S. Section, for his invaluable leadership provided to this forum. Dan played a critical role in developing a binational border health research agenda that can translate research into policies and effective health interventions. Dan passed away July 29, 2011.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................................... i
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ............................................................................................................................ 1
OVERVIEW OF THE THIRD BORDER HEALTH RESEARCH FORUM ......................................................... 2
    Purpose ..................................................................................................................................................... 2
    Welcoming Remarks .............................................................................................................................. 2
AGENDA DISCUSSION ITEMS .................................................................................................................... 3
    Background and Update on Healthy Border 2010/2020 Initiative ......................................................... 3
    Review of Healthy People 2020 ............................................................................................................. 4
    Panel Discussion on Proposed Border Health Journal .......................................................................... 5
    Discussion of Topics and Research Paper Submissions for the Next Special Edition of the 2012 PAHO Journal .................................................................................................................. 5
    Discussion of Plans for PAHO’s *Health Status in the Americas* Chapter on the U.S.-México Border ... 6
    Discussion on Institutional Review Board Issues .................................................................................. 6
    Panel Discussion on Support to Binational Centers of Excellence ...................................................... 7
    Closing Remarks .................................................................................................................................... 7
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS ........................................................................................................ 8
DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS ............................................................................................................... 9
APPENDICES ................................................................................................................................................ 10
Appendix A: Meeting Agenda .................................................................................................................. A-1
Appendix B: Senator Bingaman’s Opening Remarks and Border Health Security Act Information .......... B-1
Appendix C: Senator Udall’s Opening Remarks ....................................................................................... C-1
Appendix D: Healthy Border Presentation ................................................................................................ D-1
Appendix E: Healthy People 2020 Presentation ....................................................................................... E-1
Appendix F: Proposed Border Health Journal Presentation (Cacari-Stone) ............................................. F-1
Appendix G: Proposed Journal of Border Health Presentation (Cantu) .................................................. G-1
Appendix H: Proposed Journal of Border Health Panel Discussion Questions ....................................... H-1
Appendix I: PAHO Journal of Public Health Presentation .......................................................................... I-1
Appendix J: PAHO’s Health Status in the Americas Presentation ............................................................. J-1
Appendix K: Institutional Review Board Presentation ............................................................................. K-1
Appendix L: Suggested IRB Actions for the BHC .................................................................................... L-1
Appendix M: Centers of Excellence Presentation ..................................................................................... M-1
Appendix N: Centers of Excellence Consortium Accomplishments ....................................................... N-1
Appendix O: Centers of Excellence Panel Discussion Questions ............................................................ O-1
Appendix P: List of Participants .............................................................................................................. P-1
Appendix Q: List of Acronyms ............................................................................................................... Q-1
The United States-México Border Health Commission (BHC) convened the Third U.S.-México Border Health Research (BHR) Forum on May 16 and 17, 2011, at the Las Cruces Convention Center in Las Cruces, New Mexico. The New Mexico Office of Border Health hosted the Border Health Research Forum in collaboration with the BHC’s New Mexico Outreach Office, bringing together federal, state, academic, government, and non-governmental organizations from the United States and México.

The purpose of the BHR Forum is to collaborate and provide an opportunity for U.S. and México academic and research institutions to initiate cross-border research that governments can use to establish policy.

This year the following research priorities were discussed: 1) binational institutional review boards, 2) the proposed journal of border health development, 3) Healthy Border 2010/2020 Initiative updates, and 4) binational Centers of Excellence support.

The following items were identified for BHC action:

- Establish a tool on its website for researchers and the general public to provide input on the closeout of Healthy Border 2010 and the launch of Healthy Border 2020.
- Collaborate with the Health Resources and Services Administration to ensure the comprehensive distribution of the Borderline Health: A Chartbook of U.S. Rural Health Indicators at the Mexico Border completed by the University of South Carolina Rural Health Research Center.
- Continue to work with the adhoc IRB subcommittee to follow up on recommendations issued from the report Institutional Review Boards in the U.S.-México Border.
- Convene a subcommittee to prepare and present a proposal to the BHR Work Group and Expert Panel on the feasibility of publishing a border health journal.

Other discussion topics included a review of Healthy People 2020 and suggested research topics for the Pan American Health Organizations’ (PAHO) upcoming 2012 special edition of the Pan American Journal of Public Health and its plans for the Health Status in the Americas publication chapter on the U.S.-México border.

The next Border Health Research Work Group and Expert Panel meeting and BHR Forum are scheduled for June 3-5, 2012, in Phoenix, Arizona. These meetings will focus primarily on the proposed binational institutional review board and will include updates on the proposed border health journal and the Healthy Border 2010/2020 Initiative.
The Third U.S.-México Border Health Research (BHR) Forum, hosted by the New Mexico Office of Border Health in collaboration with the United States-México Border Health Commission’s (BHC) New Mexico Outreach Office, was held in Las Cruces, New Mexico, on May 16 and 17, 2011, bringing together federal, state, academic, government, and non-governmental organizations from the United States and México.

Purpose

The purpose of the BHR Forum is to collaborate and provide an opportunity for U.S. and México academic and research institutions to initiate cross-border research that governments can use to establish policy.

This year’s forum focused on the following research priorities

- Healthy Border (HB) 2010/2020 Initiative updates
- Proposed journal of border health development
- Binational institutional review boards (IRBs)
- Support for the Binational Centers of Excellence (COE)

The forum also included discussions relating to Healthy People 2020 Initiative updates and suggested topics for the Pan American Health Organization’s (PAHO) 2012 special edition of the Pan American Journal of Public Health, to include plans for the Health Status in the Americas’ upcoming chapter on the U.S.-México border region.

Welcoming Remarks

Dr. J. Manuel de la Rosa, BHC Member-Texas, and Dr. Dora Elia Cortés Hernández, BHC Member-Nuevo Léon, served as co-chairs for the BHR Forum and jointly opened the forum, reviewed agenda topics, and introduced the opening speakers. Dr. de la Rosa extended thanks to the New Mexico Office of Border Health and the BHC office for their efforts in coordinating the forum. He also emphasized the importance of networking to initiate cross-border research that governments can use to establish policy.

Dr. Catherine Torres, Cabinet Secretary, New Mexico Department of Health; Melanie Goodman, Field Representative, Office of United States Senator Jeff Bingaman; and Anna Apodaca, Field Representative, Office of United States Senator Tom Udall, provided welcoming remarks.

Dr. Torres underscored New Mexico Governor Martinez’s commitment to border health. She also focused on the ability to effectively reach public health goals and asked that researchers come out of the laboratory and into the local communities to carry out applied research that is directly relevant to the public’s health in the border region. She also emphasized the need for applied research to provide evidence on which to base border health strategies if public health aims—especially in the U.S.-Mexico border region—are to succeed.

Melanie Goodman read a letter on behalf of Senator Jeff Bingaman declaring his support for the BHC and the BHR Forum and stressing the need for meaningful binational research. Anna Apodaca read a letter on behalf of U.S. Senator Tom Udall affirming his commitment to ensuring resources are available for the BHC and border health programs.
**AGENDA DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**Background and Update on Healthy Border 2010/2020 Initiative**

Dan Reyna, General Manager, BHC-U.S. Section; Dr. Gudelia Rangel, Coordinator, Comprehensive Strategy for Migrant Health, México Ministry of Health; and Dr. Cecilia Rosales, BHC Member-Arizona, presented on the Healthy Border (HB) 2010/2020 Initiative.

D. Reyna provided an overview of HB 2010/2020 and reviewed the five phases of the HB 2010/2020 strategic framework. He reported that Phase I has been completed, including the publication of the U.S. and México HB 2010 midterm reports, *Healthy Border 2010 Midterm Review U.S. Border Area and Frontera Saludable 2010 - Reporte de Medio Plazo - Frontera Norte de México*, and the finalization of the *Healthy Border 2010/2020 Strategic Framework Report*. Currently, the BHC is in Phase II, which involves establishing a border binational technical work group, updating the *Healthy Border 2010/2020 Strategic Framework* report and drafting the initial strategic plan for the closeout of HB 2010 and the rollout for HB 2020. D. Reyna informed the audience that the border binational technical work group has been established and the strategic framework report has been updated and is available on the BHC website. He also reported that the BHC has presented the Healthy Border 2010/2020 strategic framework to México’s Undersecretary of Health in México City and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in Atlanta, Georgia, at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Phase III simultaneously involves the closure of HB 2010 and the launch of HB 2020. D. Reyna stated the BHC will solicit input from members throughout this phase. Phase III is expected to end during the summer of 2012, and its accomplishments will be reported at the subsequent research forum.

Phase IV will occur during 2012 and 2013 and will include increased community participation through the implementation of regional meetings. Phase IV will also involve the completion of the HB 2010 and 2020 reports with Phase V publishing and disseminating these reports.

D. Reyna also discussed the first HB Technical Work Group meeting in which Dr. Amy Martin, Deputy Director, University of South Carolina Rural Health Research Center, presented on the *Borderline Health: A Chartbook of U.S. Rural Health Indicators at the Mexico Border* that will advance the work of the HB 2010 closeout report. D. Reyna also informed that the work group prioritized the creation of a binational health information platform and relayed that México has confirmed its support in establishing the platform as well.

Dr. Rangel provided an overview of the meeting convened in México City to discuss the HB 2010/2020 strategic framework. Representatives from several offices of México’s Undersecretary of Health and other programs participated to help promote and support the HB 2010/2020 Initiative.

Dr. Rangel explained the meeting addressed the challenge of closing out HB 2010. She informed the audience that some indicators would have to be revised due to lack of information. For example, for Mexico’s HB 2010 midterm report, information was not available to measure oral health indicators. Furthermore, she emphasized the importance of ensuring both the United States and México measure the same indicators to compose a binational report. Dr. Rangel reported that México expects to have the necessary information to closeout HB 2010 by 2012 and identified remaining discussions that involve determining the priorities for HB 2020 and their indicators.

Dr. Rosales provided an overview of the meetings held with various centers at CDC that took place in Atlanta, Georgia. As with the meeting in México City, the BHC presented the HB 2010/2020 strategic framework and garnered commitment from offices and individuals. Dr. Rosales also mentioned that the HB
Border Binational Technical Work Group held its first meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, in March 2011 and reported the group was supportive of the HB strategic framework.

Participants discussed the importance of creating measurable indicators for HB 2020 with particular emphasis on documenting the methodology used. The following topics were recommended to be included in HB 2020:

- Addictions
- Environmental health
- Occupational health
- Social determinants
- Spiritual health

Participants expressed concern that some HB 2010 indicators are not measurable and affirmed the importance of identifying measurable indicators with available and relevant information within HB 2020.

Participants also discussed the accessibility of information produced by Dr. Martin. Frank Cantu, Field Director, Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), stated that HRSA will work with the BHC to ensure the chartbook and other relevant information is widely distributed.

Audience members expressed interest in attaining community involvement in the development of HB 2020. As a result, an action item was established to develop a tool on the BHC webpage that can solicit community input to the HB 2010/2020 Initiative.

Participants also discussed the importance of a wider participation base, one not only involved in the shaping of the HB Initiative, but in its promotion and dissemination as well.

Participants expressed concern for creating too many objectives and recommended limiting the number of objectives in HB 2020 to an attainable number.

**Review of Healthy People 2020**

Dr. de la Rosa introduced Geri Tebo, Public Health Advisor, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, HHS.

G. Tebo provided a background of the U.S. federal initiative Healthy People (HP). She identified that HP 2010 is currently in its final review and is scheduled to be released in the fall of 2011. HP 2020 will comprise 11 new topic areas, including global health, and 12 leading health indicators the BHC can use to prioritize HB 2020 health indicators. These indicators should be available in the fall of 2011.

HP 2020 will focus on social determinants of health that can address root causes of disease, health equity, and the increasing evidence currently demonstrating that health status is impacted by income, education, housing, and other social issues.

G. Tebo also reviewed the redesigned HP website, pointing out specific tools, including health disparities data and the Health Indicators Warehouse.
Panel Discussion on Proposed Border Health Journal

Dr. Lisa Cacari-Stone, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Community Medicine, School of Medicine, University of New Mexico, and Dr. Pedro Cantú, Chief Editor, *Journal of Public Health*, Autonomous University of Nuevo León, discussed the proposed border health journal.

Dr. Cacari-Stone began the panel discussion by presenting information regarding the previous border health journal, supported by the U.S.-Mexico Border Health Association and PAHO, founded in 1986 and last published in 2002, and the benefits/opportunities as well as drawbacks/challenges related to maintaining a journal. The benefits include creating a scholarly and cross-disciplinary space for unique knowledge and border issue visibility. The drawbacks were built upon a small readership, potentially limited research activity, and a long-term commitment.

Dr. Cantú affirmed the need for a border health journal, citing that only four journals are published in northern México in which none of them specifically focus on border health issues. However, Dr. Cantú affirmed that a strong editorial policy evaluation system and sustainable resources must exist prior to establishing the journal. He proposed creating a work group to research and analyze the feasibility of a border health journal and to present the findings to the BHR Work Group and Expert Panel. Members of the proposed work group were identified as follows: Dr. Cantú; Dr. Rosales; Dr. Cacari-Stone; Jill de Zapien, Associate Dean, Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, University of Arizona and BHR Expert Panel Member; Dr. Maria Teresa Cerqueira, Chief, PAHO U.S.-México Border Field Office and BHR Ex-Officio Expert Panel Member; and Dr. Beatriz Diaz, BHC Delegate-Chihuahua.

Dr. Cacari-Stone and Dr. Cantú reviewed and discussed previously prepared questions focused on available resources for the journal. The panel agreed that sufficient interest and research exist to create the journal.

Participants also expressed their support for the proposed journal and emphasized the journal should focus solely on border issues. They also discussed ways in which to generate a quality journal, including how to attract a suitable amount of manuscripts as well as visibility.

Dr. Rebecca Palacios, Assistant Professor, New Mexico State University (NMSU), suggested the work group designated to investigate the current amount of border research consider that researchers working on the border are often hesitant to distinguish their research as border specific, citing that such research would not be considered generalized.

Lorely Ambriz, Knowledge Management and Communication Advisor, PAHO, U.S.-México Border Office, suggested the work group use information found in the research study conducted by Dr. Howard Eng, the Southwest Border Rural Health Research Center at the University of Arizona. The study could be useful in determining the amount of border research available and the feasibility of attracting a sufficient amount of submissions.

Participants discussed the number of manuscripts that could be published per journal. Dr. Cantú suggested decreasing the number from the proposed fifteen to four or five.

Discussion of Topics and Research Paper Submissions for the Next Special Edition of the 2012 PAHO Journal

L. Ambriz provided an overview of the *Pan American Journal of Public Health* (PAJPH), an open-access, monthly peer-reviewed journal commissioned to disseminate scientific public health information of international interest. The PAJPH has a current call for articles for its 2011 special issue focusing on health and human security. Manuscripts can be submitted in English, Spanish, and Portuguese and are due by July 10, 2011.
L. Ambriz announced the PAJPH is currently accepting border health related suggestions for the 2012 special issue. Participants offered the following suggestions for the 2012 special topic issue:

- Binational collaboration
- Evaluation of indicators
- Environmental health
- Occupational health
- Substance abuse
- Spiritual health
- Zoonotic diseases
- Border health issues for policy makers

**Discussion of Plans for PAHO’s Health Status in the Americas Chapter on the U.S.-México Border**

Dr. Marcelo Korc, Environmental Health Advisor, PAHO, United States-México Border Office, presented on the *Health Status in the Americas* publication and noted that the 2012 publication will have a chapter on the U.S.-México border region. Each country’s border region will be discussed in a separate section of the overall report. The goal of the publication is to demonstrate health issues at the national level. Dr. Korc stated the first draft is due July 26, 2011.

**Discussion on Institutional Review Board Issues**

Dr. Cortés introduced Nathalie Curuchet, Deputy Director of the Human Genome Department, Office of Planning and Academic Development, National Commission of Bioethics in México City.

N. Curuchet began her presentation with an overview of the fundamental principles of bioethics and examples of research malpractices. She noted that ethics research committees (CEI in Spanish) in México are similar to IRBs in the United States. However, Mexican ethical research guidelines apply to research conducted with human subjects only in a biomedical context.

In México, the institutions conducting the majority of health research are as follows:

- Secretariat of Health
- México Institute of Social Security (IMSS in Spanish)
- State Employees’ Social Security and Social Services Institute (ISSSTE in Spanish)
- Universities

All research institutions are expected to have a CEI, which reviews proposed research through a pre-established format. México has established national regulations to guide and control the CEIs, including the creation of the National Commission of Bioethics (CNB in Spanish), an agency of the Secretariat of Health tasked with promoting a bioethical culture in México. Dr. Curuchet stated it is the CNB’s responsibility to support the creation of CEIs as well as guide the nation on bioethical issues. Additionally, the CNB is mandated to promote a bioethics commission in every state. Currently, 24 state bioethics commissions have been implemented: four are in the process of being operational and four are pending.

Participants expressed support for the creation of a binational IRB and suggested involving universities in order to create binational partnerships and to exchange information.
Participants discussed the current repercussions in México when ethical guidelines are not followed. Although some legal ramifications do exist, N. Curuchet stated a need exists to establish a solid legal framework for CEIs.

Dr. Cortés suggested the BHC focus on how it can support the Mexican border states to establish ethics committees and an infrastructure to create a binational IRB. N. Curuchet asked individuals to contact her if interested in becoming involved in the process of developing state ethical commissions.

**Panel Discussion on Support to Binational Centers of Excellence**

Dr. Vidal Balderas, Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Community Dentistry, University of Texas Health Science Center-San Antonio, and Dr. Luz Helena Sanin, Research Professor, Faculty of Nursing and Nutrition, Autonomous University of Chihuahua, responded to previously prepared questions designed to examine the advantages of the COE for border universities and border health researchers.

Dr. Balderas stated the mission of the U.S.-México Border COE Consortium is to define the needs of health professionals in the border region and to encourage partnerships between health professional schools, organizations, and HRSA-funded programs. Dr. Balderas also reviewed the accomplishments of the Consortium, which included developing a community engagement directory, convening state meetings and Consortium forums, and developing a HRSA best practices report.

Dr. Sanin underlined the importance of expanding the COEs along both sides of the border, asserting the centers could create powerful networks with the potential to advance research. Additionally, Dr. Sanin explained that an expanded program could increase epidemiological surveillance and documentation, as well as potentially influence policy. Dr. Sanin concluded the presentation by affirming the importance of COEs crossing borders and addressing common border region problems.

Participants expressed support for creating new COEs and emphasized their importance in attracting new professionals to the field. Participants also discussed the use of COEs in providing support and medical care to migrants.

Dr. Jose A. Ramirez, Head of the Food and Nutrition Academic Body, Tamaulipas Autonomous University, suggested the BHC consider including all border states in the development of the COE.

Dr. de la Rosa agreed to bring forward the suggestion as a member of the BHR Work Group and Expert Panel.

**Closing Remarks**

Dr. de la Rosa expressed his gratitude to all forum participants. Dr. Cortés extended thanks on behalf of the BHC to all participants and adjourned the forum.
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made during the BHR Forum and are categorized by topic area.

**Healthy Border 2010/2020 Initiative**

The following topics were recommended to be included as indicators in HB 2020:

- Addictions
- Environmental health
- Occupational health
- Social determinants
- Spiritual health

Additionally, participants recommended documenting the methodology used to determine HB 2020 indicators and urged the secretaries of health and state health departments be included in choosing the indicators to ensure the indicator information is readily available. As such, participants also recommended limiting HB 2020 to measurable indicators as well as limiting the number of objectives to an attainable number.

**Journal of Border Health**

- Participants supported the idea of establishing a border health journal. Dr. Cantú recommended limiting the journal to four or five articles per publication and publishing the journal in México.
- A subcommittee was established to research and analyze the feasibility of a border health journal and to present the findings to the BHR Work Group and Expert Panel. Members of the proposed work group were identified.
- Lorely Ambriz recommended examining a research study conducted by Dr. Howard Eng from the Southwest Border Rural Health Research Center at the University of Arizona. Specifically, Dr. Eng found that in the U.S.-México border region, 80 U.S.-based universities and 62 México-based universities exist. Respectively, the universities have 183 and 204 academic departments related to health (i.e., public health, nutrition, nursing, and medicine).

**Pan American Journal of Public Health**

Participants suggested the following as topics for 2012 special edition of the *Pan American Journal of Public Health*:

- Binational collaboration
- Evaluation of indicators
- Environmental health
- Occupational health
- Substance abuse
- Spiritual health
- Zoonotic diseases
- Border health issues for policy makers
**Binational Institutional Review Boards**
Participants suggested strengthening binational relationships between universities in order to create research partnerships and a smoother IRB process. Additional suggestions for the BHC included the following:

- Convening a forum comprised of researchers from U.S. and Mexican border universities to guide the development of a binational IRB.
- Supporting the México border states to establish ethics committees and infrastructure.

**Centers of Excellence**
Dr. Jose A. Ramirez, Head of the Food and Nutrition Academic Body, Tamaulipas Autonomous University, suggested the BHC consider including all border states in the development of the binational centers of excellence.

**DISCUSSION AND NEXT STEPS**

The following items were identified for BHC action:

- Establish a tool on its website for researchers and the general public to provide input on the closeout of Healthy Border 2010 and the launch of Healthy Border 2020.
- Collaborate with HRSA to ensure the comprehensive distribution of the *U.S. Rural Health Indicators at the U.S.-México Border Chartbook*, completed by the University of South Carolina Rural Health Research Center.
- Continue to work with the adhoc IRB subcommittee to follow up on recommendations issued from the report *Institutional Review Boards in the U.S.-México Border*.
- Convene a subcommittee to prepare and present a proposal to the BHR Work Group and Expert Panel on the feasibility of publishing a border health journal.

Other outcomes included topic suggestions for the 2012 special edition of the *Pan American Journal of Public Health* as follows:

- Binational collaboration
- Evaluation of indicators
- Environmental health
- Occupational health
- Substance abuse
- Spiritual health
- Specific diseases
- Border health issues for policy makers

The next Border Health Research Work Group and Expert Panel meeting and BHR Forum are scheduled for June 3-5, 2012 in Phoenix, Arizona. These meetings will focus primarily on the proposed binational Institutional Review Board and will include an update on the proposed border health journal and the Healthy Border 2010/2020 Initiative.
APPENDICES

To view an appendix, click on the appendix title highlighted in blue below:

Appendix A: Meeting Agenda
Appendix B: Senator Bingaman’s Opening Remarks and Border Health Security Act Information
Appendix C: Senator Udall’s Opening Remarks
Appendix D: Healthy Border Presentation
Appendix E: Healthy People 2020 Presentation
Appendix F: Proposed Border Health Journal Presentation (Cacari-Stone)
Appendix G: Proposed Journal of Border Health Presentation (Cantu)
Appendix H: Proposed Journal of Border Health Panel Discussion Questions
Appendix I: PAHO’s Presentation
Appendix J: Institutional Review Board Presentation
Appendix K: Suggested IRB Actions for the BHC
Appendix L: Centers of Excellence Presentation
Appendix M: Centers of Excellence Consortium Accomplishments
Appendix N: Centers of Excellence Panel Discussion Questions
Appendix O: List of Participants
Appendix P: List of Acronyms