

## IMPROVING HEALTH, ELIMINATING DISPARITIES: THE FIFTH ANNUAL PRIMARY CARE AND PREVENTION CONFERENCE

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There continues to be a gap between usual care and best-practice, optimal outcomes in primary health care for all Americans and especially for high-disparity populations. The Fifth Annual Primary Care and Prevention Conference was held September 21–23, 2005 in Atlanta, Georgia to address inequalities in primary care health outcomes and to develop strategies for improving health status among under-served communities throughout the country. The Tenth Annual HeLa Women's Health Conference focused explicitly on women's health and maternal-child health, and was held in parallel during sessions held on Thursday, September 22. The reports in this supplement of *Ethnicity & Disease* provide a sample of the presentations made during the primary care sessions as well as the women's health sessions. An outstanding faculty provided the latest treatment updates, best practices, and prevention recommendations on health and disease including cardiovascular health, cancer, diabetes, infant mortality, reproductive health, mental health, substance abuse, and universal health care.

**Key Words:** Disparities, Health Insurance, Women's Health, Hormone Replacement Therapy, Infant Mortality, Immunizations, Mental Health, Prevention, Primary Care, Race, Poverty

### INTRODUCTION

There are real and deadly gaps between usual care and best-practice outcomes in primary health care, both for Americans as a whole and especially for high-disparity populations. Each year, the Morehouse School of Medicine sponsors its Annual Primary Care & Prevention Conference to address inequalities in primary care health outcomes and to develop strategies for improving health status among under-served communities throughout the country. The Fifth Annual Primary Care and Prevention Conference was held September 21–23, 2005 in Atlanta, Georgia. The Morehouse School of Medicine is dedicated to the mission of training health professionals who practice or support primary care in our nation's medically

under-served communities, and the National Center for Primary Care extends this mission by providing resources and training to clinicians already on the front-lines of primary care for the underserved. In a collaborative partnership, the Tenth Annual HeLa Women's Health Conference, which focuses explicitly on improving women's health and maternal-child health for high-disparity populations, was held in parallel during sessions held on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Each year, this joint conference specifically seeks to accomplish the following objectives:

- Promote excellence in community-oriented primary health care and optimal health outcomes for all Americans and for high-disparity communities.
- Translate best-science, best-practice evidence-based medicine and community health into real-world application in the front-line primary care practices that served underserved and high-disparity patient populations.
- Learn together from our front-line experts (practicing clinicians) and from academic and government experts to collaboratively advance scientific knowledge in the field of primary care and prevention in high-disparity communities.

This year's conference comprised four general sessions and seven working sessions, which provided evidence-based primary care clinical updates, the latest thinking in public health, best practices for social and community health, and opportunities for practitioners to interact with a wide range of other participants from community, academic, and other backgrounds. This combination of focus and purpose has become the hallmark of this primary care and prevention meeting and, according to evaluation reports, is the element that makes it different and useful to the 300 participants. The meeting agenda offered sessions focused on health disparities related to gender, race and ethnicity, income and education, and health insurance. Programming also covered many of the 28 *HP2010* focus areas including: access to quality health services; cancer; chronic kidney disease; diabetes; disability and secondary conditions; heart disease; immunizations and infectious disease; maternal, infant, and child health; mental health; nutrition and overweight; physical activity and fitness; and the public health infrastructure.

During the conference, several special events took place that emphasized the importance of individuals, organizations,

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## FOREWORD - Rust

government, and academia sharing in a partnership to improve primary care health outcomes throughout the nation. The conference featured an awards ceremony that honored three primary health care leaders for their achievements: Georgia State Senator Don Thomas, MD for Clinical Leadership in Primary Care, Irwin Redlener, MD for Leadership in Primary Care Health Policy, and Joan Y. Reede for Leadership in Academic Primary Care. In addition, a Health Policy Summit, held on September 22, called for participants to understand, discuss, and create solutions for an improved healthcare system. For this session, the Honorable Newt Gingrich was joined by Warren Jones, MD, distinguished professor of health policy and senior health policy advisor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and Abel C. Ortiz, health policy advisor for Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue. Finally, a town hall meeting, hosted by Atlanta's 100 Black Men and Aetna, took place Wednesday evening to address, "The Challenge—Maintaining Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors." Ten local health experts discussed men's health issues related to healthy lifestyles and also health concerns arising from the aftermath of hurricane Katrina in the Gulf Coast region of the United States.

## CONFERENCE REPRESENTS UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

This conference is a unique partnership between Morehouse School of Medicine, experts in primary care, health disparities, prevention, and women's health, as well as local, state and federal agencies, health centers, industry, and medical associations. Too often, conferences such as this are designed to provide only one-way dissemination from academic institutions to practicing clinicians. Our view is that we all have as much to learn from our front-line practicing clinician experts as we do from academic researchers. We also have much to learn from each of the various agencies that support work designed to eliminate health disparities, but we have even more to learn from the conversation that occurs when we all get together. For example, the evidence is now clear that mental health and the health of other organ systems are intimately connected, and that the integration of mental health and primary care achieves better outcomes for both. So this conference is consciously designed to break down silos, and to build bridges between all the caring and compassionate individuals from a variety of sectors that are working to achieve optimal health outcomes and health equity for all.

## ORIGINAL REPORTS FROM CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

To capture select proceedings of the conference, this issue of *Ethnicity & Disease* carries five original reports and five

summary articles from the primary care sessions. In the second section of these proceedings, readers will find four original reports and one summary article from sessions held during the HeLa Women's Health Conference.

For 2006, Morehouse School of Medicine and the National Center for Primary Care have begun plans for its Sixth Annual Primary Care and Prevention Conference, which will take place Monday, September 11 through Wednesday, September 13, 2006. We invite readers to watch for more information by accessing [www.pccp6.org](http://www.pccp6.org).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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