

PHYSICIAN AND PROVIDER EDUCATION FOR IMPROVING HEALTH AND ELIMINATING DISPARITIES

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The Sixth Annual Primary Care and Prevention Conference and the Eleventh Annual HeLa Women's Health Conference was held on September 11-13, 2006 in Atlanta, Georgia. The reports in this supplement of *Ethnicity & Disease* provide a sample of the presentations made during the primary care and women's health sessions. (*Ethn Dis.* 2007;17[suppl 2]: S2-1–S2-3)

Key Words: Disparities, Primary Care, Women's Health

CONFERENCE PURPOSE

Although the effect of continuing medical education (CME) on physician understanding, knowledge, and attitudes has been questioned in the past,¹ more recent research has demonstrated that CME delivered through interactive, thoughtful teaching approaches can very positively affect physician knowledge and patient health outcomes.² Some studies on continuing medical education programs for primary care physicians have suggested a high demand for ongoing information and updates in medical areas such as cancer care, women's health, diabetes care, and elderly care, to name a few and have cited positive health outcomes for patients under the care of informed, up-to-date physicians and providers.^{3–6}

To answer this need for CME and to improve health outcomes, the Morehouse School of Medicine and its National Center for Primary Care and the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology sponsored the sixth conference on primary care and prevention and the eleventh conference on women's health during fall 2006. Guided by learning objectives, a scientific planning committee, and evidence-based educational theory, the conference offered interactive seminars, symposia, debate, and networking exchanges among colleagues.

The conference was designed to provide unique solutions to primary care practitioners who serve the medically underserved — including 46 million uninsured Americans.⁷ As demonstrated in the seminal publication, *Unequal Treatment*, evidence of disparities in health care outcomes are consistent across illnesses and healthcare services and are associated with socio-

economic differences among populations.⁸ Many conference participants are dedicated to their work in communities experiencing such sociocultural, financial or other barriers to optimal health care. According to Reilly et al, primary care physicians of the underserved population face unique environments where access to necessary care can be difficult, if not impossible, increased prevalence and severity rates of disease are disproportionate to national rates, and preventive care measures are problematic at best.⁹ Thus, the learning objectives for conference participants, who completed sessions, were:

- Report knowledge, the latest research, treatment protocols, and guidelines related to providing primary care to adults, children, and adolescents.
- Implement strategies for community-wide application of evidence-based health promotion initiatives and approaches to translating community preventive services from research to practice.
- Discuss and implement region-wide strategies that address the goals of Healthy People 2010.
- Explain solutions for eliminating barriers that prevent the translation of best science to practice for individuals and communities.
- Report the impact of health prevention on improving health outcomes and describe the role primary care practitioners play in incorporating prevention strategies into patient care.

A unique component to the Sixth Primary Care and Prevention Conference are the medical education sessions offered on women's health through the Annual HeLa Women's Health Con-

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ference. Through this collaborative effort, primary care providers attending the conference accessed specific information on women's health topics, such as breast cancer treatment alternatives, cervical dysplasia, medical treatment and nutrition in pregnancy, and other gynecological skills and knowledge proven to be essential in the primary care practice.¹⁰ A recent study by Kwolek showed that primary care physicians were not only interested in receiving updates on women's health topics but were also more likely to believe that this type of CME would reduce the number of referrals currently required to evaluate women's breast problems.⁴

ORIGINAL REPORTS FROM CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

To capture select proceedings of the conference, this issue of *Ethnicity & Disease* carries 10 original reports from the primary care and HeLa Women's Health sessions. Within, readers will find updates on: health disparities and women's health (Maddox); the HPV vaccine (Saslow); diet and cancer survival techniques for breast and prostate cancer (Barnard et al); treating depression in the primary care setting (Elliott); a hepatitis update (Hall), a commentary on international perspectives on health disparities and health justice (Danso), a discussion on micronutrients and cervical dysplasia (Piyathilake), an update on managing cardiovascular risk factors presenting in the primary care setting (Gavin), an article addressing body image disparity and culturally specific factors that affect weight in Black and White women (Ard), and an update on community-acquired infections in children (Immergluck).

For 2007, Morehouse School of Medicine and the National Center for Primary Care have begun plans for its

Seventh Annual Primary Care and Prevention Conference, which will take place September 12-14, 2007 in Atlanta. We invite readers to watch for more information by accessing www.msm.edu/NCPC.

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The Morehouse School of Medicine conference planning committee responsible for the oversight and coordination of program development and all components of the conference included:

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