

Speakers

Reducing Health Disparities Faster: *Addressing Social Determinants of Health*

A Disparities Foresight Briefing and Monthly Minority Health Briefing

By the DRA Project in conjunction with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, December 6,
2007

Clem Bezold, PhD, Chairman and Founder, Institute for Alternative Futures - Moderator

Larry Cohen, MSW, Executive Director, Prevention Institute

Mr. Cohen has led many successful public health efforts focused on tobacco control, healthy eating, safety and violence prevention at the state and federal level. He formed the first coalition in the nation to change tobacco policy, engaging the American Cancer Society, the American Heart Association, and the American Lung Association in the nation's first multi-city smoking ban. He established the Food and Nutrition Policy Consortium, whose work led to a county food policy and helped catalyze the nation's food labeling law. He also helped shape strategy to secure passage of bicycle and motorcycle helmet laws, strengthen child and adult passenger restraint laws, and establish fluoridation requirements in California.

Mr. Cohen has also done extensive work related to health disparities, including the [California Campaign to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health](#), and [THRIVE: Tool for Health and Resilience In Vulnerable Environments](#), a web-based tool designed to help communities identify and foster factors in the community environment that will improve health outcomes and reduce disparities experienced by racial and ethnic minorities. He has trained and written nationally on primary prevention of gender violence including *Sexual Violence and the Spectrum of Prevention: Towards a Community Solution*. He also helped to define violence as a preventable, public health issue, and developed one of the nation's first courses on violence prevention at the University of California at Berkeley School of Public Health.

Mr. Cohen has authored or edited many publications related to expanding primary prevention practice and promoting comprehensive strategies to improve public health, including [Prevention is Primary: Strategies for Community Wellbeing](#), *The Spectrum of Prevention: Developing a Comprehensive Approach to Injury Prevention*, and *Beyond Brochures: New Approaches to Prevention*. He is the recipient of numerous awards, including recognition from the American Cancer Society and the Society for Public Health Educators, and the Secretary's Award for Health Promotion from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He received his masters in social work from the State University of New York, Stony Brook.

Dolores Acevedo-Garcia, PhD, Associate Professor of Society, Human Development, and Health, Harvard School of Public Health

A leader in research on the social determinants of health, Dr. Acevedo-Garcia focuses on the effect of social determinants (e.g. residential segregation, immigrant adaptation) on health disparities along racial and ethnic lines; and the role of non-health policies (e.g. housing policies, immigrant policies) in reducing those disparities. She has developed DiversityData (<http://diversitydata.sph.harvard.edu>), an interactive website on socioeconomic, housing, neighborhood and health indicators in U.S. metropolitan areas, a joint project of the Harvard School of Public Health and The Center for the Advancement of Health, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. And she is leading an innovative research project using a multilevel perspective to consider health risks at the household level (e.g. allergen levels), building level (e.g. housing code violations), and neighborhood level (e.g. poverty concentration) and their impact on asthma related conditions among Puerto Rican children in the Bronx.

Dr. Acevedo-Garcia is a member of the Social Science Advisory Board of the Poverty and Race Research Action Council, and Co-Chair of the Board of Directors of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston. She regularly participates in national housing policy and healthy housing meetings. Currently, Dr. Acevedo-Garcia is on a national panel of experts on housing and health convened by the CDC and the National Center for Healthy Housing to weigh the strength of the scientific evidence on a variety of housing interventions and their effects on health.

Dr. Acevedo-Garcia has a doctoral degree in public policy and demography from Princeton University.

Stephen Thomas, PhD, Director of the Center for Minority Health at the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health and Philip Hallen Professor of Community Health & Social Justice

One of the nation's leading scholars in the effort to eliminate racial health disparities, Dr. Thomas has applied his expertise to address a variety of conditions from which minorities generally face far poorer outcomes, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, obesity and HIV/AIDS, among others. Under Dr. Thomas' direction, The [Center for Minority Health](#) has developed a number of scientifically sound, culturally relevant, community-based interventions designed to close the gap in health outcomes between whites and racial/ethnic minority populations. These initiatives are embodied in the highly successful [Healthy Black Family Project](#) that provides health coaches for lifestyle behaviors such as physical activity, nutrition education, stress management, smoking cessation and social support. The program has offices in the heart of Pittsburgh's African American community and has enrolled over 5,000 participants. Additionally, CMH has established innovative community outreach efforts through a network of ten black barbershops/salons located in the Health Empowerment Zone, a geographic space identified by the county health department as high risk for chronic disease.

Dr. Thomas has been recognized at the national level for his professional accomplishments, most recently receiving the 2005 David Satcher Award from the Directors of Health Promotion and Education for his leadership in reducing health disparities through the improvement of health promotion and health education programs at the state and local levels. He is on national committees for NIH, The National Research Council, the Institute of Medicine, CDC.

His work has been published in leading peer reviewed journals such as the *Journal of the American Public Health Association*, *Social Science and Medicine*, *Health Promotion Practice*, and *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

Dr. Thomas received his master's degree in health education at Illinois State University and later earned his doctorate in community health education from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Amparo Castillo, MD, MS, Project Director, Midwest Latino Health Research, Training & Policy Center, University of Illinois Chicago

At the [Midwest Latino Health Research Training and Policy Center](#) at the University of Illinois in Chicago, Dr. Castillo has lead community focused programs, including the [Chicago Southeast Diabetes Community Action Coalition project](#), a REACH 2010 Grantee of CDC. This project focused on reducing diabetes-related morbidity and mortality in African Americans and Latinos in Southeast Chicago by establishing a coalition of community based-organizations to address health disparities, using community participatory action. The Project showed that empowering communities through education at individual, group, and community levels is essential for success. This strategy included addressing individual needs by providing knowledge, peer support, and information; teaching people to help others while helping themselves; involving business groups and providing a win-win strategy for change; and spreading the word and inviting support from advocates and legislators. The effort focused on self management, peer support and the use of promotoras or community health promoters, and changing the food environment by making better food available commercially and through community gardens.

Dr. Castillo's community and individual health work include prevention and treatment focused on low income populations in the US and in Colombia. In Colombia she developed rural community programs, a pilot project for a city-wide vaccination effort, provided regular medical assistance for the Katio-Embera indigenous community and other communities in the state of Antioquia. Her work in Colombia and the U.S. has included motivational and preventive programs for obesity and hypertension, including the use of a range of complementary and alternative approaches, particularly meditation. She was awarded a Post-Doctoral Fellowship from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute to study the effects of meditation on heart disease in African American patients and she led or participated in research efforts on the effects and mechanisms of meditation in different ethnic groups.

Dr. Castillo received a Junior Faculty Fellowship for training in cancer issues in the Hispanic population, sponsored by Redes en Accion, a national cancer network and community participatory research program for the Hispanic population.

Doctor Castillo earned her medical degree at the Javeriana University in Bogota, Colombia, and her Master of Science at Maharishi University of Management in Fairfield, Iowa.

Rosemarie M. Henson, MPH, MSSW, Deputy Director, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC

Ms. Henson has a 17-year career with CDC managing comprehensive disease prevention and health promotion programs. Ms. Henson is responsible for providing leadership and guidance to a multifaceted public health activity to combat the leading causes of premature death and disability including heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, arthritis, and obesity and the underlying risk factors of tobacco use, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity. Ms. Henson is accountable for an annual budget of almost \$ 1 billion and overseeing a staff of 1,000 people located in the Center's ten divisions and Office of the Director.

She has had leadership positions in CDC as director of CDC's Office on Smoking and Health, the federal government's lead organization on tobacco prevention and control, and as deputy director of the National Center for Environmental Health. She has initiated surveillance and monitoring programs for tobacco and environmental health and she implemented the nation's first-ever breast and cervical cancer screening program of the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program that today supports screening for millions of underserved women nationwide.

Ms. Henson has been the recipient of several significant honors, including the prestigious Presidential Rank Award for Meritorious Service in 2007, the Surgeon General's Certificate of Appreciation for exemplary efforts in the development of the Surgeon General's Report on the Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke in 2006, and the Jeffrey P. Koplan Award for outstanding leadership in global tobacco prevention and control in 2004.

Prior to joining CDC in 1990, Ms. Henson served in several public health leadership positions within the Massachusetts Department of Public Health in Boston Massachusetts. Ms. Henson earned her Master in Public Health and a Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University.