This past April, the Hopkins Center for Health Disparities Solutions (CHDS) celebrated National Minority Health Month by hosting an event each week at the Johns Hopkins University Medical Campus. The collection of events focused on health disparities experienced by minority populations and solutions to address these problems.

The first annual Hopkins CHDS Minority Health Month Seminar Series was co-sponsored by Mid-

Atlantic Public Health Training Center, Center for Health Disparities Studies- SON, National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, Hopkins Council for Health Disparities, Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, DC Baltimore Center to Improve Child Health Disparities –SOM, and the Urban Health Institute.

WHAT TO EXPECT IN THIS NEWSLETTER...

• Latino Health Paradoxes in Low Birth Weight
• World's Apart
• The Role of Public Health
• Project: LIVE!
• Eliminating Health Disparities

Spoken word performer Ja-Hipster and Dr. Tiffany Gary from Project: LIVE! take a moment for a picture at the 2005 Minority Health Month reception.

…LOOK INSIDE FOR MORE ABOUT PROJECT: LIVE!
On April 7, 2005, the first annual Hopkins CHDS Minority Health Month Seminar Series was kicked off with Dr. Dolores Acevedo-Garcia and her lecture entitled “Are There Latino Health Paradoxes in Low Birth Weight?” The lecture discussed the trends of low birth weight (LBW) infants in the Latino populations. For instance, Foreign-born Latino women of low socioeconomic status are less likely to have LBW infants than US-born Latino women. Furthermore, the protective effect of foreign-born status is stronger among Latino women with less than high school education. The unique aspect to this phenomenon is that low maternal education is considered to be a risk factor for LBW infants, Latino immigrant women do not conform to expectation of a negative education gradient in LBW. When Latino immigrant women are broken down into subgroups, Mexicans is the group that shows the clearest reduction in risk among foreign-born women compared to US born women. In conclusion, Dr. Acevedo-Garcia proposed several directions for future research to better understand this observed health paradox.

Dr. Acevedo-Garcia is an assistant professor in the Department of Society, Human Development and Health at Harvard University. Her research focuses on the effect of social determinants (e.g. residential segregation, immigrant adaptation) on health disparities along racial and ethnic lines, the role of non-health policies (e.g. social policies, immigrant policies) in reducing those disparities, and the differential effect of public health policies (e.g. tobacco control policy) on various racial/ethnic groups. Her current research questions include investigation of the effects of residential segregation by race/ethnicity and by class on the large disparities in health outcomes that exist along racial/ethnic and class lines in the United States, the role of assimilation and acculturation in shaping health outcomes among immigrants and the effects of immigrant policies on health outcomes among immigrants.

Week 2: “World’s Apart: A Four-Part Series on Cross Cultural Health Care”

In February 2004, award-winning filmmakers Maren Grainger-Monsen, M.D., and Julia Haskett released World’s Apart, a film that explores the issues of cross-cultural communication between patients and their health care providers, tensions between modern medicine and cultural beliefs, and the interference of racial and ethnic discrimination in effective health care delivery. This film reflects the common cultural misunderstandings and resulting hindrances that occur in the patient-physician interactions in the US health care system.

We used World’s Apart during the second week of Hopkins CHDS Minority Health Month Seminar Series as a platform to initiate dialogue about cross-cultural health care and the importance of cultural competence of health care organizations. Directly following the viewing, a panel discussion about the complications of cross-cultural interactions between health care providers and patient clientele and the importance of cultural competence was held. The panel included Dr. Thomas LaVeist, director of the Hopkins CDHS and professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Dr. Debra Roter, a professor in the Department of Health Care Ethics and Patient Centered Care, and Dr. Michelle Gourdine, associate professor in the Department of Health Behavior at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Week 3: “Can We Close the Health Disparities.....Gap? The Role of Public Health”

While substantial advances of disparities in the US. On April 19th, Dr. Michelle Gourdine discussed the US health gap in her lecture entitled, “Can We Close the Health Disparities Gap? The Role of Public Health.” Dr. Gourdine touched on the current areas of health where disparities exist, such as life expectancy, infant mortality rates, and disease-related mortality. Because several factors, such as genetics, access to care, socioeconomic status, education, utilization of health services, race, and lifestyle choices, contribute to differences in health statuses, she discussed the need for the public health response must be multifaceted in its approach in minimizing health inequalities. Project: LIVE! was developed to reach this segment of the population. Staff from the Center for Health Disparities Solutions teamed up with web based organization called Poetology (www.poetology.com) that promotes poetry, spoken word, and other artistic activities and events in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and nationwide.
We concluded the Hopkins CHDS Minority Health Month Seminar Series with the Lectureship in Minority Health and Health Disparities by Dr. Georges Benjamin. In “Eliminating Health Disparities: Ensuring Access to Care,” Dr. Benjamin explained the contribution of the lack of access to affordable, quality health care to the health disparities gap. Minorities consistently face higher rates of morbidity and mortality than whites in the US. Without effective medical treatment, health problems are exacerbated and may cause greater suffering, disability, and premature death. Inequalities in health among racial and ethnic groups will continue to persist without ensuring access to appropriate health care to all.

Dr. Benjamin’s earlier work involved bioterrorism and emergency preparedness, West Nile virus, and mental health care. During his tenure as the secretary of the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH), he played a key role developing Maryland’s bioterrorism plan. Dr. Benjamin then became the deputy secretary for public health services in the Maryland DHMH. After a successful career in the state government, Dr. Benjamin accepted the position of executive director of the American Public Health Association, a title he continues to maintain.