



NATIONAL FORUM LATINO HEALTHCARE EXECUTIVES

for

WHITE PAPER: LATINO EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE U.S. HEALTH CARE SECTOR 2009

The National Forum for Latino Healthcare Executives (NFLHE) works with the nation's health care system to meet the needs of diverse communities throughout the U.S. An essential component of this work is the development of upcoming generations of Latino health care executives who will meet the nation's challenges of delivering and improving the health of our communities.

NFLHE and its members serve as leaders and resources in health and health care research and policy. Our members are experts in the fields of health care legislation, regulation, and policy that affect the health and well-being of all U.S. communities.

BACKGROUND

U.S. health care organizations have a long history of providing care to culturally and linguistically diverse populations. Although the English language and Anglo-European culture have gained dominance, the U.S. today possesses a vast diversity of culture and language, adding to the richness and vitality of our cultural landscape. Of particular note, the western and southwestern region of the U.S. still reflects a predominantly Spanish cultural and linguistic heritage that was well established in the early sixteenth century.

Critical to improving health care for our culturally and linguistically diverse populations is responsive and accountable executive leadership. The infrastructure required to initiate and to sustain promising strategies for improving care, especially in the face of severe financial constraints, depends upon the vision, skill, and commitment of the organization's executive leadership.

In 2004, the Institute of Medicine published the report, *In the Nation's Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health Care Workforce*ⁱ, that called for increased

diversity in the health care workforce as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce health disparities. This report cited that:

- Racial and ethnic minority health care providers are more likely to serve minority and medically underserved communities, thereby increasing access to care;
- Racial and ethnic minority patients report greater levels of satisfaction with care provided by minority health professionals;
- Racial and ethnic minority health care providers can help health systems in efforts to reduce cultural and linguistic barriers and improve cultural competence; and,
- Diversity in higher education and health professions training settings is associated with better educational outcomes among **all** students.

There is current research that indicates a definite “carry over” effect that points to an overall improvement of quality of care for **all** groups when there is a concerted effort to improve care and to address disparities for minority patients.ⁱⁱ Latino executives bring an increased awareness and responsiveness to the health care needs of their communities and are instrumental in improving the quality of care for all.

Although Latinos now make up 14 percent of the U.S. population, only 2 percent of hospital chief executives in the U.S. are Latino. Such disparities need to be addressed for the well-being of our increasingly diverse nation. It is crucial to the nation that health care organizations recognize and respond to these health care needs.

Other reports assessing the presence of Latinos and other persons of color in health professions continue to highlight the importance of increasing Latino executive leadership in U.S. hospitals and health systems for improving access to quality care:

- The joint study, *A Race/Ethnic Comparison of Career Attainments in Healthcare Management* by the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE) and the National Association of Health Services Executives (NAHSE) showed that minorities continue to fall behind Whites in several areas of health care management.ⁱⁱⁱ Their report listed several recommendations but a common theme existed of strengthening networks of minority health care professionals in order to offer support and strategies for greater career opportunities.
- The Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce reiterated the lack of representation in *Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions* (The Sullivan Report)^{iv}, a report in response to the Institute of Medicine 2002 warning of the unequal treatment that minorities face in the health system. The Sullivan Report stressed the importance of creating a culture aimed at increasing diversity in the workforce, exploring new and nontraditional paths to the private sector.

- The Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund (PRLDEF) released the *Condition Critical: The Absence of Latino among Policy Makers in New York City Voluntary Hospitals*^v, which highlighted not only the lack of Latino representation in hospital administration and boards but also the barriers the Latino patient population faces in receiving care.

These reports are a part of the testimony to the obstacles facing Latino senior health care executives, as well as a challenge to become engaged in exploring new avenues to improving community health and the representation of minorities in health administration and health professions.

DISCUSSION

Increasing the role of Latino senior health care executive leadership is a critical element for effective health policy and program development that benefit all our communities. Health systems and their leaders, however, face many challenges. Some of the most important include maximizing limited resources and building the trust of the communities they serve. The U.S. spends nearly twice as much as other industrialized countries on healthcare: \$5,711 per person in 2007. Hank Hernandez, CEO of Las Palmas Medical Center in El Paso, TX and 2007 NFLHE President, points out: *“We should ask ourselves, ‘Are these resources being allocated across the whole population – in other words, are all Americans benefiting from this spending?’ The answer is no, not everyone is being served. And one way to remedy that inequity is to have hospital executives who reflect and understand the community and can address the needs that the community articulates. That’s why we are here.”*

Community relationships are critical to the success of health care executives and health systems. Health care systems further their goals by developing close relationships with community partners. These relationships yield benefits such as reduced health care costs and increased staff loyalty. NFLHE and its Latino executive leaders are a reflection of the nation and the need – on a national level – for diversity in the health care system.

The principal strategic objectives of NFLHE are to increase the representation of Latinos at the executive level of U.S. hospitals and health systems and to provide a resource base of input from Latino executives in the areas of legislation, regulation, and policy affecting the health and health care of U.S. Latino communities. Although identified as separate strategic objectives, they are envisioned both as complimentary and essential for strengthening the presence of Latinos in healthcare.

NFLHE has established the following development goals:

- To create a network of Latino senior hospital and health system executives that can support executive leadership development and encourage Latino leadership representation in the national health care setting.

- To develop partnerships with senior health care executive organizations and leading Latino health organizations.
- To promote a research and networking agenda that explores strategies for improving the health and health care not only of Latino but of all communities in the U.S.

NFLHE's strategies to achieve these goals include:

- **NETWORK BUILDING - DEVELOP A CADRE OF FUTURE LATINO/A HEALTH CARE LEADERS**
 - Promote a *network* of Latino senior hospital and health system executives that can support executive leadership development and encourage Latino leadership representation in the national health care setting.
 - Develop fellowships program to build the “next generation” of Latino health care executives.
 - Establish grants and scholarships for higher-level education in healthcare administration/business programs.
 - Plan and organize national conference and symposia to highlight the role of Latino health care executives.
 - Plan and organize receptions and networking events for senior leadership to create cross-organizational programs and knowledge exchange.
 - Develop website job postings and search capabilities to provide a vehicle to disseminate opportunities for advancement.
- **PARTNERSHIPS - COLLABORATE WITH OTHERS IN THE U.S. HEALTH CARE SECTOR**
 - Work with executive recruiting firms to develop their capacity and expertise in the effective recruitment of potential Latino candidates for leadership positions in health care.
 - Develop partnerships with health care executive organizations to broaden their focus of activity to draw more Latinos into their membership activities.
 - Collaborate with leading Latino health organizations to expand their expertise and impact by providing an executive and leadership perspective to health and health issues.

- Advocate regarding health issues that affect U.S. Latino communities and provide direction to the development of health policy that benefits all communities.
- RESEARCH AGENDA - NATIONAL PRESENCE AND VOICE FOR QUALITY HEALTH CARE FOR ALL
 - Promote a research agenda that explores the attainment and development of Latino hospital and health system executives and the health care in the U.S. Latino population.
 - Assess the role of Latinos in the management and governance of health care organizations in the U.S.
 - Track the progress of Latinos/as in health care administration beginning from their educational success through their career journey.
 - Assess the effectiveness of initiatives to increase the role of Latinos/as in health care.
 - Promote the results of research with the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and other relevant entities.

CALL TO ACTION

We welcome you to become involved. Contact us:

National Forum for Latino Healthcare Executives (NFLHE)
855 West Adams
Chicago, IL 60607
Tel: 312-733-6262
Fax: 312-733-5162
Email: nflheinfo@nflhe.org
Website: www.nflhe.org
NFLHE Liaison: Jessica Cervantes

NOTES

ⁱ Committee on Institutional and Policy-Level Strategies for Increasing the Diversity of the U.S. Healthcare Workforce, Institute of Medicine, *In the Nation's Compelling Interest: Ensuring Diversity in the Health Care Workforce*, Washington, DC: National Academy Press; 2004.

ⁱⁱ Beal A, Doty M, Hernandez S, Shea K, Davis K, *Closing the Divide: How Medical Homes Promote Equity in Health Care: Results from the Commonwealth Fund 2006 Survey Health Care Quality*, Volume 62, The Commonwealth Fund, New York; June 27, 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ *A Race/Ethnic Comparison of Career Attainments in Healthcare Management*, American College of Healthcare Executives, Association of Hispanic Healthcare Executives, Executive Leadership Development Program, Indian Health Service, Institute for Diversity in Health Management, National Association of Health Services Executives, Foundation of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Chicago; 2002.

^{iv} Louis W. Sullivan, *Missing Persons: Minorities in the Health Professions, A Report of the Sullivan Commission on Diversity in the Healthcare Workforce*, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Battle Creek, MI; 2004. Available at: <http://www.wkkf.org>.

^v Fuentes A, *Condition Critical. The Absence of Latinos among Policymakers in New York City's Voluntary Hospitals*. Puerto Rican Legal Defense Fund, Public Health Informatics Institute, New York; 20004.