



For Immediate Release

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**13 health care organizations selected for national leadership program
to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care**

BOSTON – April 10, 2007 –Thirteen health care organizations – including hospitals, health plans, community health centers and a public health department – from around the United States have been selected to participate in a year-long executive leadership program designed to tackle racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

The Disparities Leadership Program is the first program of its kind in the nation, and is designed for leaders from hospitals, health insurance plans, and other health care organizations who are seeking to develop practical strategies to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care. The program is led by the Disparities Solutions Center at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston, Massachusetts.

The goal of the Disparities Leadership Program is to create a cadre of health care leaders who have:

- an in-depth knowledge of the causes and research surrounding health care disparities;
- cutting-edge, quality improvement strategies and skills to address disparities;
- the leadership skills to implement solutions and help to transform their organizations.

Participants include:

Health Plans

- Health New England, Springfield, MA
- Presbyterian Health Plan, Albuquerque, NM
- Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, CA
- Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Boston, MA

Hospitals

- Mount Sinai Hospital Medical Center, Chicago, IL
- Saint Luke's Health System, Kansas City, MO

- Boston Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA
- Tufts-New England Medical Center and Floating Hospital for Children, Boston, MA
- Baylor Health Care System, Dallas, TX

Community Health Centers

- Great Brook Valley Health Center, Worcester, MA
- Harbor Health Services, Inc., Dorchester, MA
- Access Community Health Network, Chicago, IL

Public Health Department

- Louisville Metro Department of Public Health and Wellness, Louisville, KY

“This program is about developing new leaders and taking action. It is about helping individuals and their health care organizations understand the critical connection between improving quality and eliminating disparities in care through a concerted, coordinated effort to change our health care system,” said Joseph R. Betancourt, MD, MPH, Director of the Disparities Solutions Center at MGH, and a member of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee, which produced the 2002 landmark report (*Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*) which revealed striking disparities in the quality of health care services delivered to minority and white patients -- even for patients of the same socioeconomic background and access to care. “These health care organizations are clearly distinguishing themselves as national leaders by taking action to identify and address disparities,” Dr. Betancourt said.

Created in July 2005 as the nation’s first, hospital-based disparities center, The Disparities Solutions Center at MGH has significant experience in addressing racial and ethnic disparities in care. The Center has pioneered efforts at MGH to routinely collect and monitor patient outcome data by race and ethnicity as part of its quality measurement, and to identify and address disparities in care through culturally appropriate interventions. The Center has worked closely with Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino’s city-wide Disparities Project, as well as several leading health plans including Blue Cross Blue Shield.

The Disparities Leadership Program is jointly sponsored by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), and co-sponsored by Joint Commission Resources (JCR), an affiliate of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). The program is supported in part by an unrestricted educational grant from Merck & Co., Inc.

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