

## LHI Hosts Annual Conference of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses, New York Chapter

With more than 3 million members, the nursing profession is the largest single segment of the nation's health care workforce. Working on the front lines of patient care, nurses are expected to play a vital role in transforming the health care system under the 2010 Affordable Care Act.

But what challenges and opportunities will the nursing profession confront as its members deal with a rapidly changing health care system? It is a question the National Association of Hispanic Nurses – New York Chapter (NAHN-NY) decided to explore at their annual educational conference on Oct. 7, 2011.

Beth Israel's Latino Health Institute (LHI) was proud to host the NAHN-NY conference for the third straight year. As with the previous two, this year's single-day conference was held at Beth Israel's Phillips Ambulatory Care Center on Union Square, and LHI helped produce and promote the event.

Entitled "Mapping the Future of Health Care: How Nursing Will Transform and Lead the Change," the conference sought to assess the impact of healthcare reform legislation and related Institute



(l. to r.) Mimi Gonzalez, RN, NAHN-NY Board Member; Dr. Jaime Torres, Regional Director, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Christine Kovner, PhD, RN, FAAN and keynote speaker; Maria Elena Pina-Fonti, RN, MA and President of NAHN-NY.

of Medicine (IOM) recommendations on the nursing profession. The President of NAHN-NY, Maria Elena Pina-Fonti, gave a welcome address before introducing the keynote speaker, Dr. Christine Kovner, a professor at the College of Nursing, New York University. Well-known for her research on the cost and use of health personnel, Dr. Kovner delivered a presentation called "The Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action."

*Continued on page 4*

## National High Blood Pressure Education Month



Kerry Carroll, a Phillips Beth Israel School of Nursing student (left), checks blood pressure at Asser Levy Recreation Center on East 23rd Street.

May was National High Blood Pressure Education Month, and Beth Israel's Latino Health Institute (LHI) conducted a series of seminars and screenings around the city to help educate the public. These included presentations about the signs and risk factors for high blood pressure as well as

the threats it poses. Nearly 68 million Americans suffer from high blood pressure. It can damage kidneys and eyes, and it is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke, the first and third leading causes of death.

As is often the case with LHI's outreach, the presentations were tailored to the audience at hand. For example, the relationship between blood pressure and diabetes was highlighted at the **McBurney YMCA**, where the seminar was held in conjunction with a monthly meeting of diabetics. At the **Stein Senior Center**, the focus was on the role of change and stress in high blood pressure. For the **International Center for the Disabled's** Vocational Rehabilitation Group, workplace stress issues were discussed. At the **Asser Levy Recreational Center**, the importance of exercise was highlighted. And at the **Boys & Girls Harbor School** in East Harlem, the emphasis was on factors such as diet, exercise, and sleep habits. *(More on teens and high BP see Viewpoint, pg. 2.)*



## LHI Viewpoint



**Hugo O. Rosero, D.O.**  
Continuum Heart Institute  
Beth Israel Medical Center

**Because of rising rates of obesity, unhealthy eating habits and physical inactivity, it is likely that young adults today will be less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.**

## High Blood Pressure in High School?

Ah, to be young again, right? Not so fast, especially if you are Latino, African American or poor growing up in an urban environment like New York City.

Beth Israel's Latino Health Institute (LHI) has been conducting outreach programs in several local high schools. And what appeared to be a routine presentation aimed at educating students at the Emily N. Carey School in East Harlem about the dangers of high blood pressure turned into a shocker.

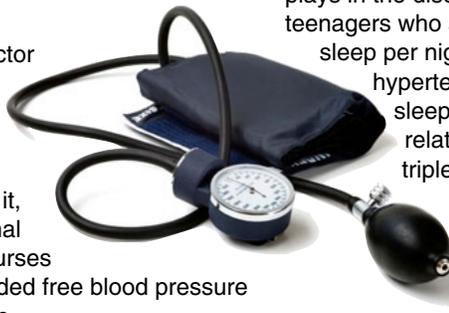
After LHI's Executive Director Sharon Voytush guided the class through the health risks of high blood pressure and steps they could take to prevent it, volunteers from the National Association of Hispanic Nurses – New York Chapter provided free blood pressure screenings for the students.

The screenings were intended to be another way to raise awareness of cardio vascular health among these teenagers. But despite their youth, more than half of them tested in the at-risk range or had high blood pressure. The nurse volunteers were so surprised that they actually checked their testing equipment to ensure that it was functioning properly.

We learned that many of these kids weren't getting enough sleep, which is hardly surprising given the prevalence of distractions like television, the Internet, text messaging, and video games. That, combined with the lack of exercise and poor diet we've seen all too frequently among minority youth, seems to have led to a rise in hypertension.

These findings may seem counterintuitive, but research shows that it's part of an alarming trend around the nation. Once only a concern among adults, data is emerging that shows the disease is spreading increasingly younger. A recent study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) found that one in five young adults (ages 24-32) may have hypertension (the result of high blood pressure).

Other studies have confirmed the role sleep plays in the disease. One such study found that teenagers who average less than 6.5 hours of sleep per night are twice as likely to develop hypertension, and those with troubled sleep patterns – which are often related to adolescent obesity – are at triple the risk.



LHI is now incorporating high blood pressure education and screenings into its **American Heart Association-**

**sponsored program**, designed to provide practical information and solutions that high schoolers can use to improve their diet and well-being as well as that of their immediate family. The American Heart Association also recommends that all children receive annual blood pressure screenings, noting that several minority groups are at greater risk.

The disturbing rates of asthma, diabetes, and obesity among New York City's Latino youth have long been a driving force for the outreach work that we do at Beth Israel and the Latino Health Institute. And seeing hypertension added to that list of health threats only strengthens our resolve.

# El Curativo

NEWS FROM THE LATINO HEALTH INSTITUTE

### Our Mission

Improve the health status of New York City's Hispanic community by providing culturally competent services, improved access at all levels of care, education about healthy life choices, and solutions to the problem of ethnic and racial health disparities.

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## Latino Health Institute Receives Award from the International Center for the Disabled



ICD students at their commencement ceremony applauding Beth Israel.

Thanks to its ongoing work with the International Center for the Disabled (ICD), **Beth Israel Latino Health Institute has been named the organization's Employer Partner of the Year for 2011.** LHI's Executive Director Sharon Voytush, RN, MS, accepted the award at ICD's commencement ceremonies, speaking briefly about the success of their partnership.

"Supporting the excellent training and rehabilitation work done by the International Center for the Disabled has been very gratifying," said Voytush. "By providing ICD graduates with career advice and clerical internships at Beth Israel Medical Center, we

have given New Yorkers with disabilities an opportunity to enter the mainstream workforce, begin a career, and attain a degree of normalcy in their lives."

For the past two years, Beth Israel and LHI have also participated in ICD's annual Disability Mentoring Day. Voytush and other Beth Israel

executives have offered career counseling and mentoring to ICD students – many of whom are Latino. Disability Mentoring Day also includes a career fair that offers jobseekers the opportunity to discuss their employment goals and hone their job interview skills. This has resulted in a dozen students being placed in internships at Beth Israel Medical Center.

ICD provides rehabilitation and training programs for New Yorkers with disabilities and other needs. LHI conducts regular health screenings and seminars for ICD vocational rehab students. And while the primary focus of LHI is to address the health disparities of the Latino community, its work benefits all minority groups.

"In addition to educating patients and doctors about cultural sensitivities, one of the ways we strive to overcome racial and ethnic health disparities is by helping create a more diverse workforce in the healthcare community," explained Voytush. "Diversity benefits patients, families and our health system's culture and effectiveness."



LHI Executive Director Sharon Voytush (c.) accepted the ICD Award from Maria Jacobson, Director of Vocational Services (l.) and Les Halpert, PhD, Pres. & CEO of the International Center for the Disabled.

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month

### LHI Conducts Month-long Bilingual Outreach Program

The survival statistics for breast cancer have come a long way. Ninety percent of women diagnosed with the disease will survive at least five years, and most of those will continue to lead healthy, vibrant lives without any recurrence. And if that cancer is detected early, before it spreads from the breast, the five-year survival rate jumps to 98 percent.

This underscores the importance of educating women about the risks of breast cancer and the importance of self-examinations and screenings. This is especially critical for the elderly, who are most likely to get the disease, and certain minorities who are more likely to die from it.

In support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, Beth Israel's Latino Health Institute (LHI) conducted a series of breast health education seminars throughout October. Recruiting doctors from the Appel-Venet Comprehensive Breast Service at the Beth Israel Medical Center, LHI orchestrated presentations that outlined the various aspects of and concerns

surrounding breast cancer, including risk factors, the roles of genetics and lifestyle, mammograms and self-exams, coping with cancer, and surgery and other treatment options.

The presentations were conducted in Spanish and English, and the Beth Israel breast surgeons who generously participated in this program – **Dr. Alyssa Gillego** and **Dr. Beth Freedman** – fielded numerous questions during the subsequent Q&A sessions. Breast health informational packets were distributed in both Spanish and English as well.

This outreach program visited several venues throughout the city, targeting populations often overlooked by more mainstream health awareness programs. These sites included the Raphael Hernandez Houses Senior Center on the Lower East Side, the International Center for the Disabled, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation's Asser Levy Recreation Center and the Stein Senior Center.



Dr. Beth Freedman (c.), a breast surgeon from the Appel-Venet Comprehensive Breast Service at Beth Israel Medical Center is flanked by (l.) Syrvella Hall, Program Coordinator, Asser Levy Recreation Center, and (r.) an Asser Levy member who attended Dr. Freedman's presentation on breast health.



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## LHI and IPRO Help Latinos Learn to Manage Their Diabetes

The rates of diabetes and related illnesses among Latinos are staggering – even more so in New York City. Roughly one in eight New York City residents has diabetes, and nearly 60-percent of the city’s adults diagnosed with diabetes are Hispanic or African American. And diabetes is on the rise in the five boroughs, increasing 13 percent since 2002.

Since it was founded in 2006, Beth Israel’s Latino Health Institute (LHI) has been actively fighting to close the diabetes disparity in New York City. Through its culturally based outreach efforts, LHI has been educating NYC’s Hispanic community about the dangers posed by this deadly disease as well as ways in which it can be prevented and treated.

This summer LHI teamed up with IPRO to conduct a series of Diabetes Wellness Workshops in English and in Spanish. The six-week course is designed to teach Latino and African-American New Yorkers how to better manage the disease. IPRO is a national nonprofit organization providing healthcare quality improvement services to achieve better patient outcomes.

Targeting diabetics who are Medicare beneficiaries, the Diabetes Wellness Workshops were held on consecutive weeks at Beth Israel Medical Center’s Phillips Ambulatory Care Center on Union Square in Manhattan. Each workshop was lead by a certified diabetes educator specializing in self-management.

“Diabetes self-management education addresses cultural, social and behavioral concerns of people with diabetes,” explained LHI’s Executive Director Sharon Voytush. “The workshops teach coping skills as well as how to manage blood



*A group of graduates from the LHI-IPRO diabetes self management course display the Certificates of Participation they received for completing the program.*

sugar, make healthy life choices and understand diabetes medications.”

The content of these diabetes wellness workshops is based on IPRO’s “Every Diabetic Counts” program, a national educational initiative carried out under the direction of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

“We use an evidence-based approach to diabetes self-management, focusing on factors that your average person can easily observe and understand,” explained Janice Hidalgo, Project Manager of IPRO’s Diabetes Disparities Initiative.

“We have found that community outreach programs that focus on diabetes self management are one of the most effective ways for healthcare providers to improve outcomes for people with the disease, particularly in minority communities,” added Hidalgo.

### National Association of Hispanic Nurses Continued from page 1

“The United States has the chance to transform its system and culture of health care, but only if nurses are better prepared and able to practice and lead to the full extent of their education and training,” said Dr. Kovner.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Regional Director Dr. James Torres was a featured speaker at the event, presenting “The Affordable Care Act: One Year Later.”

“We appreciate the Latino Health Institute’s support with our conference, and particularly the opportunity to conduct it at Beth Israel’s Phillips Ambulatory Care Center,” noted Ms. Pina-Fonti. “We share a common cause as we strive to attract

more minorities to the profession and educate and empower the Hispanic community about a variety of health care issues.”

The NAHN-NY will be hosting their Sixth Annual Awards Gala on Dec. 09, 2011. The dinner dance will serve both as a fundraiser for the organization’s scholarship fund as well as an opportunity to present those scholarship awards to members who have demonstrated their commitment to the organization’s mission, vision, and goals and are seeking to pursue additional levels of education. LHI is honored to represent the Beth Israel family at this event and demonstrate their continued support for the NAHN-NY.

