



Hector Castro, MD, is Medical Director of Beth Israel's Latino Health Institute, created to help eliminate barriers to quality health care for New York's Hispanic community.

Latino Health Institute Combats Crisis in New York

One out of every four New Yorkers is Latino, yet these residents—the city's largest minority group—are confronting what **HECTOR CASTRO, MD**, calls the "Hispanic health deficit." "New York's Latinos are facing health issues and challenges at rates that are considered epidemic when compared to the rest of the population," says Dr. Castro, who serves as Medical Director of Beth Israel's new Latino Health Institute. "The reasons for this Hispanic health deficit are complex, but cultural and communication barriers play a significant role. The Latino Health Institute

was created to help New Yorkers overcome those obstacles." The Institute was founded in 2006 as a partnership between Beth Israel Medical Center and the Itzamna Medical Center, which was created by Dr. Castro as one of the city's first private-physician outpatient facilities to reach out to the Latino community. New York's Hispanics face

The Institute will help eliminate cultural and communication barriers.

higher risks for diabetes, high blood pressure and HIV/AIDS. And the number of Latino children suffering from asthma has been described as an epidemic by some. "Dr. Castro has been fighting a guerilla war against the health crisis in our Hispanic community," says **DAVID J. SHULKIN, MD**, Beth Israel's President and CEO. "The work he and his team at Itzamna have been doing provided a blueprint for the Latino Health Institute. Together with the resources of Beth Israel, we've launched a full-scale assault to overcome the cultural, language and other barriers to quality health care in the Latino community."

The Latino Health Institute is continuing Itzamna's tradition of community outreach, conducting educational seminars aimed at prevention and early diagnosis. It also is recruiting Hispanic and bilingual doctors, nurses and staff to Beth Israel. This will help eliminate cultural and communication barriers at all levels of care.

"We are operating on two fronts—within the Hispanic community itself and within the health care community as a whole," explains **SHARON VOYTUSH, RN, MS**, who serves as the Institute's Executive Director. "We want to teach Latinos the importance of a healthy body, mind and spirit, but we also need to teach health care providers how to improve cross-cultural understanding and communication so they can become more culturally sensitive health advocates."

"This is the first step toward eliminating ethnic and racial health disparities facing New York's Latino community," Dr. Castro says. "The health of our city depends on it." ■

>>FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THE LATINO HEALTH INSTITUTE AT (212) 420-9225.

PHOTOGRAPHY: RENE PEREZ

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