

## Beth Israel Latino Health Institute Working with Hispanic Federation to Shape 2008 Legislative Agenda

### Pursuing Laws and Funding to Solve Health Problems Among State's Minorities

The Hispanic Federation invited the Latino Health Institute to participate in its Health Care Disparities Roundtable on June 28, 2007. The Hispanic Federation represents 90 Latino health and human services agencies in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania and strives to provide them with the support and resources they need through lobbying and public awareness activities.

Hector Castro, MD, and Sharon Voytush, RN, M.S., represented the Latino Health Institute at the event, which was co-chaired by Lillian Rodriguez, President and CEO of the Hispanic Federation, and Anthony A. Clemendor, MD, Chairman of the Medical Society of New York's Task Force to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Health Care Disparities. The featured guest speaker was the Honorable Darryl C. Towns, Chairman of the New York State Assembly's Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus.

The purpose of the roundtable was to establish priorities and develop a unified agenda that would drive both legislation for and funding of health initiatives affecting minority groups in New York State. With New York's top minority health care leaders on hand, three priority areas were quickly identified – access to health care; career mentorship and training for youth; community education and disease prevention initiatives. The recommendations generated to address these issues included ideas for both lawmakers in Albany as



*Sharon Voytush, Executive Director, Beth Israel Latino Health Institute and NYS Assemblyman Darryl C. Towns, Chairman of the NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus*

well as minority health care leaders in their own communities.

“One of the ways legislators in Albany can help close this gap is to introduce or support measures that will increase the pool of minority medical personnel,” noted Assemblyman Towns. “We should increase state funds for existing and new higher education opportunity programs for college prep, recruitment, admission, retention and graduation of minority students from New York’s colleges and universities.”

The Latino Health Institute has already committed to expanding the number of Latinos in the health care industry. In April 2007, we held our first ever Career Day for Hispanic Youth at Beth Israel Medical Center. It was conducted in partnership with ASPIRA, a nonprofit dedicated to the education and leadership development of Latino youth.

“Latinos and other minorities need to be aware of the career opportunities available in the health care system,” added Dr. Castro. “As more minorities begin to work in health care, more minorities will begin to seek and receive the health information and services they need and deserve.”

During the meeting Dr. Castro and Sharon Voytush described how Beth Israel is working to chip away the problems minorities face. Representatives of other minority health organi-



*Hector Castro, MD, Medical Director of Beth Israel Latino Health Institute (l.) and William R. Abrams, Executive Director of the Medical Society of the State of New York*

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David J. Shulkin, MD



Hector Castro, MD

**“We cannot allow the gap between the healthcare information and services that Latinos and other minorities receive to continue to widen.”**

### Dear Friends:

It’s been a busy summer for us, as you can see from the stories reported here. We’ve been moving forward with our Community Outreach Program. We’ve continued to expand our network of multi-cultural medical professionals. And we’re about to launch our first Web site.

But we want to take a moment to talk to you about one activity that we hope will make a large and lasting difference in the Latino community. And that is working with elected officials to help guide legislation and funding aimed at eliminating ethnic and racial health disparities here in New York State.

In late June, the Latino Health Institute was invited by the Hispanic Federation to attend a roundtable on this subject, with Darryl C. Towns, Chairman of the New York State Assembly’s Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus. At the roundtable, we all agreed to work towards a legislative agenda that addressed three primary concerns: access to healthcare across the board, career mentorship and training for our youth, and education and disease prevention initiatives in our local communities.

But one theme that came across loud and clear from this meeting had more to do with the Institute’s approach to this issue rather than the political solutions we hope to achieve. The consensus we reached is that more than enough time has been spent studying health disparities –

it’s time for Albany to put more muscle and money into implementing solutions.

We cannot allow the gap between the healthcare information and services that Latinos and other minorities receive to continue to widen. We’ve seen study after study detailing the devastating effects of health disparities on individuals and communities. We’ve studied the problem to death. It’s like global warming. We know it exists. Healthcare providers and legislators alike must do more, without delay.

As minority healthcare leaders, regardless of our race or ethnicity, we need to work together – with state and civic leaders – to turn these numbers around and start closing the gap. That is why we are working with the Hispanic Federation and others to provide legislators with a clinical perspective on how to fix these problems.

At the Latino Health Institute, we are also taking the solution into our own hands – through initiatives within the Hispanic community as well as the health care community.

We care about your health. And we are doing something about it.

Sincerely,

**David J. Shulkin, MD** **Hector Castro, MD**  
*President and CEO* *Medical Director*  
*Beth Israel Medical Center* *Beth Israel Latino Health Institute*

# El Curativo

NEWS FROM THE LATINO HEALTH INSTITUTE

### Our Mission

Improve the health status of New York City’s Hispanic community by providing culturally sensitive services, improved access at all levels of care, education about healthy life choices, and elimination of the causes of ethnic and racial health disparities.

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## Latino Health Institute Opens a New Front: ONLINE

### LatinoHealthInstitute.com to Launch in August

The Latino Health Institute is committed to improving the quality and quantity of health information available to New York's Hispanic community. That is why we are launching our initial Web site – LatinoHealthInstitute.com – in August 2007.

Naturally, the site will provide all the essential details about the Latino Health Institute, including the history, mission and leadership of the organization as well useful information about the range of health care services we provide.

Over time, as we add tools, health-oriented news and spotlight Hispanic health issues, we want it to serve as an interactive resource for healthy Latino living. The site will also serve as a port of entry into the Beth Israel system for patients, helping them gain access to care at every level and from all medical specialties.

"The Web site is a necessity to provide information about the Latino Health Institute and how to access the health services we provide," said Dr. Castro. "Hispanics are embracing the Internet in growing numbers. They view it as a tool for building better lives for themselves and their families."

According to a report issued by the Pew Hispanic Center in March of this year, 78 percent of Latinos who are English-dominant and 76 percent of bilingual Latinos use the internet, compared with 32 percent of Hispanic adults who speak only Spanish.

Be sure to bookmark **LatinoHealthInstitute.com** and check back in the coming weeks!

## LATINO HEALTH INSTITUTE / PHYSICIAN PROFILE

### Eddys Disla, MD



Dr. Eddys Disla has come a long way from Guanatico, a village near Puerto Plata in the Dominican Republic where he was born and raised. As a new member of the Attending Faculty at Beth Israel Medical Center, he is an award-winning professor, a sought-after physician, and a recognized expert in rheumatology.

For those of you fortunate enough to be unfamiliar with the diseases and conditions that fall into the category of rheumatology, they involve the joints and their connective tissues. Perhaps the most notable is osteoarthritis, a painful inflammation caused by the wearing of the cartilage that functions as a cushion in the joints. It's estimated that 21 million Americans suffer from osteoarthritis, accounting for nearly 25 percent of the visits to primary care physicians.

Dr. Disla currently serves as a member of the Rheumatology Division at Beth Israel Medical Center. He is also a member of the Latino Health Institute.

Before joining the staff in July 2007, Dr. Disla was the Chief of Rheumatology and Director of Rheumatology Fellowship in the Department of Medicine at Cabrini Medical Center in New York City, a teaching hospital of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine. Prior to that, he served as an Attending Physician in the Emergency Departments at Brooklyn's Woodhull Hospital and at the Clinica Independencia in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Dr. Disla attended medical school at the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. He did his residency in Internal Medicine at the Woodhull Medical & Mental Health Center, which is part of the State University of New York. And he completed his Fellowship in Rheumatology at Cabrini Medical Center.

However, his education is only part of Dr. Disla's academic credentials. He served as a Professor's Assistant in Biostatistics at the Medical School of the Autonomous University of Santo Domingo, Assistant Professor of Medicine at the New York Medical College in Valhalla, and even taught at Cabrini – where he won various Excellence in Teaching Awards – before coming onboard at Beth Israel.

Dr. Disla has been widely published in a variety of medical journals, particularly for his work in studying the affects of rheumatoid arthritis and AIDS. He is a member of the American College of Rheumatology, American College of Physicians, New York Rheumatism Association, Spanish American Medical Society, and Sociedad Medico Dental Dominicana.

In addition to his many academic and education activities, Dr. Disla maintains a busy primary care and rheumatology practice.

"I am fortunate to have the opportunity to help others, to help alleviate their pain and improve their health," noted Dr. Disla. "And now, having joined forces with the Latino Health Institute, I have found a new way to give back to the community, using my skills and talents as a doctor as well as my Hispanic heritage."

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zations also shared their thoughts and experiences with the group. In the end, the roundtable participants agreed to develop sets of legislative recommendations regarding the three priority areas of health care access, career training, and community education which will be provided to Assemblyman Towns by the Hispanic Federation in the months ahead.

"We want to pursue legislation and funding that will do a better job of helping us eliminate disparate health care for racial and ethnic minorities – as opposed to simply conducting yet another study that might delay any significant action," said Sharon Voytush.

"Analysis of the problem is necessary, of course," concluded Voytush. "Ultimately, you've got to take action and achieve results in solving these problems. That's what we're looking for from Albany – laws and dollars that will help us address a major public health concern."



Lillian Rodriguez, President and CEO, Hispanic Federation and Anthony A. Clemendorf, MD, Chairman of the Medical Society of New York's Task Force to Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Healthcare Disparities

## New TeleFutura Talk Show Helps Hispanics Navigate Through Life

### Univision's Antonio Martinez Discusses Asthma 'Epidemic' with Hector Castro, MD

Antonio Martinez says the aim of his new public affairs show, "Noticias 41 en Tu Comunidad," is to illuminate topics that have a big impact on Hispanics, their families and the community.

On August 4, Dr. Hector Castro of Beth Israel's Latino Health Institute was interviewed by Martinez for the full 30-minute show. They discussed Latino healthcare disparities, focusing on asthma, a leading chronic illness among Hispanic children and youth in the United States.

"There is no cure for asthma, but it is a very manageable disease," says Dr. Castro, a practicing pulmonary specialist, internist and critical care specialist.

"Noticias 41 en Tu Comunidad" airs Saturday's at 10 AM on Univision-owned TeleFutura, which is seen on Ch. 67 and Ch. 68 in the New York area. Upcoming shows will deal with autism, domestic violence, immigration and citizenship.

If you missed the original broadcast of Dr. Castro's conversation with Antonio Martinez, you can still see it at [LatinoHealthInstitute.com](http://LatinoHealthInstitute.com).



Antonio Martinez, news anchor for Univision and TeleFutura with Dr. Castro

# Spreading the Gospel of Good Health

## Dr. Castro Talks About Diabetes at Manhattan Churches; New York City Housing Authority Venues Also on Latino Health Institute Agenda

On May 20, 2007, Dr. Hector Castro spoke to members of the congregation at Old St. Patrick's Cathedral after the Sunday morning Spanish-language mass. This speech kicked-off the Latino Health Institute's Community Outreach Program, aimed at spreading the word about specific health challenges and solutions in New York's Hispanic community.

At Old St. Pat's, Dr. Castro made a presentation to the parishioners about the diabetes epidemic in the community. He discussed the damage this disease has done as well as what people can do to prevent and treat it. The response was overwhelmingly positive and Dr. Castro fielded quite a lot of questions from attendees, and then stayed afterwards to talk one-on-one.

"Discussing diabetes and its affects on the community is great entry point for us," explained Dr. Castro. "It's treatable and managable, but cultural factors and a lack of Spanish-language information about the disease have made it an epidemic in the city's Latino community.

"So when we talk about diabetes, people tend to sit up and listen," added Dr. Castro. "It's as if they suddenly realize the importance of the work we do – educating the Hispanic population about health issues and providing bilingual and culturally sensitive services to them."

Other serious health problems the Institute's outreach program will address include cardiovascular disease, HIV/AIDS, asthma, and cancer prevention and treatment. To combat obesity, Dr. Castro also talks about nutrition.

Next up for Dr. Castro is the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe on West 14th Street in Manhattan, which has asked him to come address the congregation in the next few weeks. St. Columba on West 28th Street in Manhattan has asked him to speak in September, and a number of other churches around the borough are hoping to schedule him as well.

In addition, the Latino Health Institute has been invited to participate in a variety of health-related events run by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA). The Institute expects to be able to expand the outreach program to include NYCHA venues later this summer.

## Beth Israel Opens Sleek New Postpartum Unit High-tech Features and Spa-Like Amenities Make Patients' Stays Safer and More Enjoyable

Beth Israel Medical Center has a well-deserved reputation for providing superior postpartum care to a mother and her baby. Now the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology is introducing New Yorkers to the next generation of maternity care with a luxurious new postpartum unit in the Karpas building on Beth Israel's campus at First Avenue and 16th Street in Manhattan.

The new unit offers 22 beds in a combination of private and semi-private rooms. Different from standard hospital rooms, the new postpartum rooms offer pampering features like steam showers and color-therapy décor. Ergonomic beds set a new standard for patient comfort and are loaded with high-tech features designed to enhance patient safety. Spanish-speaking nurse therapists offer postpartum counseling as well as advice on nutrition and exercise.

"After giving birth, mothers really need a place to feel calm and an opportunity to refresh themselves and relax," says Dr. Zoe Rodriguez, a physician in the department. "Everything in these new rooms supports health and comfort."

The new accommodations represent phase one of a three phase project. By year's end Beth Israel will expand the unit, adding an additional 20 beds.

If you would like a tour of the new unit, please feel free to contact our Parent Education staff at 212-420-2999.

