

Empowering Hispanic Communities through Action, Community Involvement and Public Health

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This fourth issue of the Journal of the National Hispanic Medical Association reflects the collective effort of “unsung heroes” nationwide, working to empower Hispanic individuals and populations to take control of their health and well-being through community involvement and culturally relevant approaches.

As a pediatrician leading a perinatal newborn section, I witness daily—beyond just the statistics—how rapidly the Hispanic population is growing, making it increasingly urgent for all of us to advocate for and address the unique public health challenges they face. This collection of articles highlights crucial areas of focus—voting rights, social media engagement, health fairs, unique case discussions, cancer treatment adherence, and representation in medical education—all of which intersect to empower the Hispanic communities and improve overall population health.

The importance of civic engagement, particularly voting, is underscored in Alvarez's article, which emphasizes the barriers Latino medical professionals encounter. These obstacles not only affect their civic participation but also hinder efforts to advocate for policies that promote health equity. By providing tangible solutions to reduce these barriers, we can enhance the collective voice of healthcare professionals dedicated to serving Hispanic populations.

In an age where misinformation can rapidly spread, Gonzalez-Arias advocates for leveraging social media to combat health disparities related to diabetes and obesity among Latinos. Culturally sensitive health promotion through these platforms can empower individuals to make informed choices, but it is essential to address access disparities. Collaboration among healthcare providers and public health officials is vital to ensuring these efforts are effective and equitable.

Khurana's study on health fairs reveals the power of community-driven initiatives in understanding and addressing the barriers faced by the Hispanic population in Metro Detroit. The high prevalence of chronic conditions and the significant barriers to care—such as lack of insurance and language challenges—highlight the necessity for targeted interventions. Health fairs not only provide critical health services but also foster community engagement and empowerment, serving as a model for similar initiatives nationwide.

The experiences of Hispanic breast cancer survivors, as explored by Granda-Cameron, underscore the complexities surrounding treatment adherence. The qualitative insights reveal significant gaps in patient education and communication, particularly for Spanish-speaking patients. Culturally competent care, characterized by trust and understanding, is crucial for improving adherence to endocrine blocking therapy and ultimately enhancing survival rates in this vulnerable population.

Moreover, the representation of Hispanic faculty in medical schools, as reported by Romero, raises concerns about the disparities in academic medicine. Despite a growing Hispanic population, faculty representation has increased only marginally over the past 50 years.

This underrepresentation perpetuates a cycle of inequity, limiting mentorship opportunities and affecting the cultural competence of future physicians. Finally, Solano's exploration of artificial intelligence in clinical practice highlights the potential for technology to improve patient care, especially within Spanish-speaking populations. While AI tools can alleviate some administrative burdens, careful consideration of their implementation is necessary to ensure they meet the needs of diverse patient populations.

Together, these articles illuminate a pathway toward a more equitable public health landscape for Hispanic communities. By overcoming barriers to voting, harnessing the power of social media, fostering community engagement, ensuring culturally competent care, and promoting diversity in medical education, we can create a more responsive and empowered healthcare system. The goal is clear: to enhance the health and well-being of Hispanic populations, decrease disparities, and promote health equity for all.