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'salud'- to your health

Johns Hopkins University nursing faculty and students reach out to Baltimore's growing Hispanic population

In the summer of 1991,

7-year-old Alexis would wander into my makeshift school nurse office every morning crying, "My stomach hurts."

After determining that her ailments were not related to parasites or anemia, she charmed her way into receiving other nursing interventions — a hug or two.

My "office" was a classroom turned health suite in a Colorado elementary school, which provided summer school programs for children of migrant workers. This was my introduction to outreach for the growing Hispanic population in the United States and to the children whose cries for whatever interventions illustrated the needs of Hispanic immigrant children.

When the summer ended, I realized I needed to follow my vision for outreach work back home in Baltimore. That summer I developed sensitivity to the challenges impacting the Hispanic population. Now 15 years later, I along with the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing and other community members, have established multiple outreach serv-

ices to the Hispanic community.

Among them is Programa Salud, a program staffed by JHU nursing faculty and students who provide direct services, health promotion initiatives and facilitate health education to Hispanics. The faculty and students in Programa Salud work at free health clinics serving the Hispanic community. They assist public health nurses who provide home visits to pregnant women, serve in community agencies and case manage vulnerable families, to name a few services.

Changing Face of Baltimore

In the early 1990s, the changing face of Baltimore motivated me to improve language and cultural competency skills to develop outreach and health promotion to a vulnerable population. Today, Programa Salud is part of the Community Outreach Program at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, with students and faculty providing healthcare to the Hispanic community.

As the largest minority group in the United States, Hispanics make up 14.2 percent of the U.S. population. By the year 2050, it is estimated one in four persons will be of Hispanic ethnicity.¹

Baltimore's Hispanic population mirrors these national statistics, but the city was not prepared to address the healthcare needs for this growing group. Baltimore's Latino population grew from approximately 7,000 in the 1990s to more than 40,000 in 2005. ➤

by Lori Edwards,
MPH, APRN, BC

photography by Jay Wiley

Key community leaders, such as the Mayor's Office of Hispanic Affairs, project this group to grow as high as 60,000. Although the total Baltimore City population has decreased significantly in the past 10 years, the city's Hispanic population is estimated to have increased 80.1 percent between 1990–2000.¹

Community-Based Strategies

A growing Hispanic population could mean a bigger gap in health disparities. The Healthy People 2010 federal initiative seeks to eliminate health disparities for groups including Hispanics. To address these disparities, there must be community-based strategies built upon partnerships. Therefore, the mission of the Johns Hopkins SON's Community Outreach Program is to work with the community to provide health services and address the Healthy People 2010 objectives.

Over the past 15 years, the SON's community health nursing faculty has formed extensive partnerships with more than 40 local community organizations. When I first began outreach efforts, I realized there were limited health services for the Hispanic community, and so we hired a community health worker from Guatemala. With her guiding force, the SON responded to the needs of this community by establishing the Women's, Infants and Children (WIC) program specifically for Latino families. In 1998, Baltimore City had only one WIC site with one Spanish speaking staff member. So the SON Community Outreach Program established another WIC program in a southeast Baltimore neighborhood, the most predominant area for Hispanics.

This partnership led to more partnerships and expansion of our outreach services. More and more health programs were requested by community agencies serving Hispanics. One request came from an early Head Start program that was enrolling children and parents who only spoke Spanish. They requested education on children's health and safety. With nursing students, we developed curriculum in Spanish for educating the Head Start mothers and as a training manual for the teachers to use. Nursing students now use this curriculum at other community agencies and teach children's health to parents.

Matching Resources

What has made the SON's outreach efforts to the Hispanic community so successful has been the matching of resources. Although Baltimore City has few health providers who speak Spanish, there are advocates within community organizations who work with health providers to make healthcare services available.

Additionally, the SON has many bilingual students who are committed to working for this population. Through the SON's Returned Peace Corps Volunteers Fellows Program, which started in 1991, many baccalaureate and graduate nursing students who have worked in diverse villages around the world come to Baltimore and bridge the gaps in health disparities. Each year these students, many of whom are culturally and linguistically fluent in Spanish, become community outreach student nurse interns and assist the Hispanic clients in places such as the Baltimore City Health Department, other community agencies or in the SON nurse-managed clinics; one clinic is run by the SON nurse faculty and another is run in conjunction with the JHU Urban Health Institute.



STUDENT EXPERTISE: Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing students who staff Programa Salud in the southeast section of Baltimore bring a wealth of expertise to the program including language skills and experience in the Peace Corps. Here (seated left) Lori Edwards, MPH, APRN, BC, coordinator of the nursing students at the clinic, discusses clinic business with Nicole deButts (center), a nursing student, and instructor Kelly Bower, MSN, MPH, APRN, BC.

Students in coursework have been instrumental in changing the direction of outreach efforts for Baltimore. In 2000, a graduate student concluded in her community assessment course project that the Baltimore City Health Department did not have any Spanish-speaking providers. When the student pointed out a lack of culturally and linguistically available health services, the health department hired a liaison for the Hispanic community. This partnership with the health department and the SON has led to the development of Programa Salud, facilitating students to volunteer in health department clinics and programs to provide necessary translation services.

Programa Salud

Nursing students work directly with families and welcome them to a city that is not always language or culturally friendly. Programa Salud nursing students in particular work in many settings around the city to reach the Hispanic community. This year approximately 30 nursing students are working with the Hispanic community. I mentor these students so that, ultimately, students will completely lead the program while faculty would only facilitate their services and supervise when clinically necessary.

In the health department's Maternal and Infant Nursing Program, students work alongside public health nurses, making home visits to high-risk pregnant women. Students translate for the nurses and apply their new knowledge about prenatal, postpartum and infant care while learning about the vital role of a community health nurse.

The SON faculty and Programa Salud students are also leading other outreach efforts, such as participating in a health screening program focused on diabetic retinopathy, running health fairs targeted to the Hispanic community and providing health education programs and case management for the most vulnerable families. In addition to free health clinics, SON Programa Salud activities have included an STD outreach screening program, Birth Companions Program students targeting outreach to the Hispanic community and flu shots given at a local Hispanic services agency.

Continued on page 42



RECORDS TELL A STORY: The volume of patient records tells only part of the story about the busy Programa Salud clinic run by nursing faculty and students from Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing. The clinic, located in southeast Baltimore to serve its large Hispanic population, provides all types of healthcare including education, screening, vaccinations and more. Kathy Burks, CRNP (right), confers in the records room with Kelly Bower, MSN, MPH, APRN, BC, a nursing instructor, and Lori Edwards, MPH, APRN, BC, who coordinates the nursing students at the clinic and is also an instructor at JHU School of Nursing.

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'Community as Partner'

What began as outreach services has now become a coordinated service as part of the SON's Community Outreach Program. We now address disparities in healthcare for this population through a coordinated program, led by passionate and committed student nurses and under the leadership of dedicated visionary community health nursing faculty.

It is imperative for nursing to eliminate health disparities.² The partnerships and relationships between community organizations and the SON are beneficial in two ways: Students provide direct healthcare to this minority population while gaining cultural competency and community health skills. The community and the agencies are provided with bilingual and culturally sensitive providers.

The long-term relationship the SON has developed with the Hispanic community is perhaps one of the greatest reasons for this successful outreach under Programa Salud. Our theoretical framework of "community as partner" has facilitated our work with existing community organizations that are well established and respected in the community. To address the health disparities and the growing needs of the Hispanic population, it will take many more years of commitment and investment with trusted partners.

As Alexis came to the nurse complaining about her stomach and then was healed by a simple hug, we at Programa Salud hope we have opened our arms and warmly welcomed this growing Hispanic population in Baltimore. We hope we are able to meet the healthcare needs, one hug at a time, but with well established partnerships and strategic outreach. ■

References

1. U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division. (2005). U.S. ethnicity and ancestry brand. Retrieved Nov. 20, 2005 from the World Wide Web: <http://factfinder.census.gov>.
2. Berkowitz, B., & McCubbin, M. (2005). Advancement of health disparities research: A conceptual approach. *Nursing Outlook*, 53, 153-159.

Lori Edwards is an instructor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, Baltimore, and faculty coordinator of the JHU Community Outreach Program and Programa Salud.

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