



**Fourth Annual Conference on Latinos Health: Social justice and Latino Health
Sponsored by New York University (NYU), October 28-29, 2005**

The Fourth Annual Conference on Latinos Health was sponsored by the School of Medicine and the Centers for Health Disparities Research of New York University (NYU), and organized by an Advisory Board chaired by Dr. Mariano Rey. Dr. Rey and Martha Laureano, the Conference coordinator, have extensive experience working with health disparity issues at the NYU School of Medicine. This year the Conference focused on social justice in the areas of healthy housing, health education, health care services, access to services, immigration, and domestic violence.

According to the 2000 Census there are over 35 million Latinos in United States. The State of New York hosts a large Latino community (approximately 3 million residents) that is multi racial and heterogeneous in their culture. The largest groups are from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

PAHO's Gender, Ethnicity and Health Unit (GE) was invited to participate in the Conference's panel on *Racism and Health* to highlight the experience of Latin American countries related with health disparities and ethnic communities. GE's Regional Advisor for Ethnicity and Health, Dr. Cristina Torres, presented a comparative analysis of the health of Latinos in the U.S with the health of those in Latin America.



The key areas of comparison were health status, access to services, data collection and accessibility to statistical information, policy and program development, and civic society participation. Dr. Torres's presentation showed that when comparing health status and the access to services among Latinos living in the U.S from Puerto Rico, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic, Latinos living in the U.S. had, in most cases, better outcomes than members of these communities in their countries of origins.

Dr. Torres concluded that Latinos face significant barriers in the access to health care in the U.S. and that, in some cases, the percentage of those without health coverage in the U.S. was similar to that found in their homelands. One of the most common challenges cited by Latinos in the U.S. in terms of access to health services is the language barrier faced by most who are not confident speaking English. Other elements to be considered in the development of a solid framework to achieve good health among Latinos include

disaggregated data by race and ethnic group, that has been available since 1970 allowing to monitor the situation, a federal policy, Healthy people 2010, launched in 2000, dedicated to reducing health inequities in minorities and a strong civic society working at the community level to advocate for and deliver health services to Latinos in the U.S.

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