



DIALOGUE ON DIVERSITY

Over Twenty Five Years of Service to America's Diverse Communities

NEWS ADVISORY

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A QUEST FOR POLICY STABILITY — ACHIEVEMENT OF WELLNESS

Washington, D.C. — June 22, 2018 In the handsome art deco ambiance of the of the Sixteenth Street offices in Washington of the UNIDOS US organization, Dialogue on Diversity on June 20th presented its nineteenth Health Care Symposium, setting forth the up-dated concepts and science on a series of prime health care topics. “The large health care topic has morphed, over the last several years,” remarked **Ma. Cristina Caballero**, President of Dialogue on Diversity, “into a highly productive discourse on ‘Wellness’ – the now finely delineated concept of a physical and mental freedom from illness or dysfunction, but wrapped in a combine of prosperity and the healthy match of individual abilities with work.” It thus involves a sociological dimension and significant economics aspects.

Opening the day's agenda was an overview by **Dr. Joyce A. Hunter**, recounting her career in the *Institute for Minority Health and Health Disparities*, part of the National Institutes of Health, which has been her professional home during much of its recent history. The emphasis is fixed squarely on research, and its budget, however limited, goes to decipher the life and death puzzles of biological phenomena and therapeutic strategies.

Highlighting the program were the remarks of **Dr. Malcolm N. Joseph**, Medical Director of the mid-Atlantic's *CareFirst* health insurance colossus, in which he reviewed the status and future of medicine – both the professional service and the social concern, with attention to the newly central project in research, that of Precision Medicine. The field of health care is filled with unfinished business, both knotty problems and day to day accomplishments. It is one thing to observe these passively, another matter, one pioneered by Dialogue on Diversity in its Symposia, to bring them creatively before audiences of active citizens. The Dialogue's **2018 Health Excellence Award** was presented to Dr. Joseph, honoring his concern, over the space of a career, for patients and the larger public's well-being which, at their best, both medical professionals, insurers, and other ancillary institutions are committed to serving.

The fraught topic of cultural competence was dealt with by the remarkable **Dr. Jorge I. Ramallo**, an Ob-Gyn physician in Northern Virginia, and part of the *National Hispanic Medical Association*. He noted the agility he and his staff, all bi-lingual, must exhibit in caring for a body of patients, along with some English speakers, mostly Latina patients.

Perhaps the most telling of the symposium contributions was that of **Mr. Ronald Honberg**, the chief legal officer of the *National Alliance on Mental Illness*, who, in written statements on key issues of mental illness and its related legal aspects, has sought to introduce a new degree of realism and indeed empathy in the attitudes of the population and in the rulings of courts. He gave over a section of his remarks to the debate on any role of mental illness in recent firearms attacks. It appears that in fact mental illness only rarely issues in this sort of violent conduct.

Luís Borunda, Maryland's *Deputy Secretary of State*, the first person of Latino heritage to hold the post, reviewed some of the State's achievements in designing an ingenious version of Medicaid, known as the Maryland Model, which enlists medical providers and hospitals in a voluntary effort to minimize hospital stays and costs. The Model is gathering interest nationally.

Mara Youdelman of *The Health Care Program* think tank, **Stephanie Glover** of the *National Partnership of Women and Families*, and **Debra Curtis**, manager of the *D.C. Health Benefits Authority*, the municipal agency presiding over the insurance options of District residents, reviewed in a hard-hitting panel the state of the ACA in the presence of a series of recently erected administrative impediments to its full operational effects.

Leading off the afternoon session, **Scott Weinstein**, attorney at *McDermott Will & Emery*, discussed aspects of the key role information technology has come to play, and the expanded, more penetrating role it is doubtless destined to play in the proximate future. Alongside the technological innovations are the complex legal and moral concerns with privacy for users and third parties.

In an extensive discussion of the role of medical and preventive services in the reproductive health setting, **Bridgette Gomez** of the *Planned Parenthood Federation of America*, offered a detailed account of the panoply of services, from contraception and STD treatments, that it affords for an often economically disadvantaged clientele, and recounted the very special position of the PPFA organization in the health care firmament, founded a century ago and having resiliently withstood near constant controversy during the decades since.

Carmen Pastor reviewed the research on Alzheimer's disease and the important role that civil society groups, such as her own *Fuerza contra Alzheimer's*, is playing in both fundraising for research and in arranging care and publicizing the need for aid as the necessary caregivers for the elderly afflicted with this destructive condition. Among other speakers were **April Rai**, head of the *Organization for Youth Safety*, who discussed bullying, the all too common harm suffered by young persons, often in school settings, at the hands of aggressive students, often by violence, but again through hostile speech, spreading malicious rumors, and the like. **Hilda Crespo**, Vice President of the *Aspira Association*, laid out the factual picture with respect to HIV/AIDS, noting the hot spots for the infection around the world and the magnitude of efforts, governmental and private sector, to combat the disease.

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