

Upcoming Binational Health Week to highlight UCB-UCSF health collaboration in new UC-Mexico Initiative

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15th Annual Binational Health Week will highlight UCB-UCSF health collaboration in new UC-Mexico Initiative

Over the first two weeks of October, many distinguished guests from Latin America will be in the Bay Area for the **15th Annual Binational Health Week** which will be hosted by the University of California, Berkeley, nearly a full decade and a half since its inception in 1980. The week has become one of the largest mobilization efforts in the Americas to improve the health and well-being of the underserved populations.

This event, organized by **The Health Initiatives of the Americas at UC Berkeley**, under the leadership of Professor Xochitl Castañeda of the UCB School of Public Health, brings together a notable list of the “who’s who” of Latin America health leadership—from Mexico, especially—and a wide network of foreign consulates, foundations, and governmental leaders from the Secretariats of Health and Foreign Affairs of Mexico, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, several Departments of Public Health, the Council of Mexican Federations in North America.

The week kicks off with an evening welcome reception at the Mexican Consulate in San Francisco followed by the annual **Binational Policy Forum on Migration and Global Health** where there are presentations, panels, and workshops on critical Latino health issues—HIV/AIDS, diabetes, occupational health, influenza, and health insurance access. The week’s activities will bring together federal, state, and local government agencies, community-based organizations and hundreds of volunteers for health promotion and education activities. The week ends with a Gala Event celebration at St. Marys Cathedral in the city.

This year’s festivities are especially significant because of new global health collaboratives of the **UC-Mexico Initiative**, a unique platform launched in 2014 by UC President Janet Napolitano, in partnership with the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and the National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT). The Initiative is bringing together scholars and leaders from the University of California and from distinguished sister institutions in Mexico to consider innovative ways to broaden and deepen connections for the benefit of all in the five areas of energy, health, environment, education and arts/culture.

The Health Working Group of the UC-Mexico Initiative is led by **Stefano Bertozzi, Dean of the UC Berkeley School of Public Health** and **Jaime Sepulveda, Executive Director of UCSF Global Health Sciences**, both of whom once held formal leadership positions in Mexico’s health system. Priority areas include: Nutrition and Diabetes, Violence, and Maternal and Neonatal Health. The HWG is also developing a platform of online binational certificates in Health Services Management and Regulatory Sciences. An Advisory Board comprised by high-level representatives from the academia, business, and non-profit sectors advise the initiative.

The goal, of course, is to influence global public health at local and global levels and throughout the lifecourse to benefit the health of the most vulnerable, and to ensure sustainability at various levels within the health ecosystem. “Any program that seeks to address the health needs of immigrants in the United States, especially in California, cannot ignore the strong ties this population has with their countries of origin,” said Stefano Bertozzi, Dean of the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. “Thus, the health of migrants must be a bilateral responsibility, and this is what the UC-Mexico Initiative and Binational Health Week promotes at the very end.”

That UCSF and UC Berkeley are leading the way is somewhat of an ideal situation, bringing together the strength of two leaders with strong influential ties to Mexico, and leveraging ongoing local partnership between the two schools. Bertozzi also highlighted that, “The UC-Mexico Health Initiative represents a major opportunity as a public institution: We are convinced California’s future depends in good measure upon the quality of life of its immigrant population. We are proud to be a major partner in this monumental task.”

For more on binational health week, please visit: <http://www.binationalhealthweek.org/> (<http://www.binationalhealthweek.org/>). And for more on the UC-Mexico Initiative: <http://ucmexicoinitiative.ucr.edu> (<http://ucmexicoinitiative.ucr.edu/>).

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