



BINATIONAL HEALTH WEEK

Because the Right to Health has no Borders

The XVI Bilingual Health Week (BHW) was celebrated under the motto “Because the Right to Health has no Borders”. This annual effort, which takes place during the month of October in the United States and Canada, has the objective of providing health information and services to the most unprotected populations of Latin American origin. Since 2001, thousands of health activities have been organized with the coordination of the Mexican Secretariats of Health and Foreign Affairs, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Peru, and support from the Health Initiative of the Americas, a program of the School of Public Health at the University of California Berkeley. These activities include free screenings, vaccinations, information workshops, referrals to social and health services, forums, and sporting events.



The opening event of the XVI BHW in Tonatico, Mexico.

The local activities are led by the consulates of the participating countries with the support from community clinics, hospitals, non-profits and non-governmental organizations, local and state governments, universities, community centers, and private entities. It should be noted that in certain cities with a significant Latino presence such as Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Houston, Miami and Toronto, these efforts are joined by additional consulates from other Latin American countries. This year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia, through the Colombia Nos Une program (“Colombia Unites Us”, in Spanish), expanded the BHW model to other countries, leading to the celebration of the BHW in Mexico, Venezuela, Ecuador, Chile, and Argentina, in addition to the US and Canada. The Health Ministry of Mexico also carries out health activities in states with high immigration rates, especially along the US border.

In this way, the BHW is one of the largest mobilizations of community efforts in the Americas to improve the health and well-being of the migrant Latino population.

Opening event in Mexico



The opening event of the XVI BHW in Tonatico, Mexico.

The inaugural event of the XVI BHW was held on October 4th, 2016 in Tonatico, Mexico. The president of the municipality of Tonatico, Ana Cecilia Peralta Cano, welcomed the attendees and authorities, who included: the Mexican Health Secretary, Dr. José Narro Robles; the Health Secretary from the State of Mexico, professor César Nomar Gómez Monge; the governor of the State of Mexico, Dr. Eruviel Ávila Villegas; the head of the Institute of Mexicans Abroad, Dr. Eunice Rendón Cárdenas; the Ventanilla de Salud program coordinator in Dallas, Texas Dr. Francisco Javier Gámez; and the Director of the Health Initiative of the Americas, Xochitl Castañeda. The event was followed by a health fair where hundreds of families benefited from information and free health services.

XVI Binational Health Week Results

The consulates of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia and Peru, as well as other non-governmental organizations that participated in BHW, reported 1,784 health events in 2016, where 240,146 people attended, with the participation of 4,680 organizations, and where 224,146 free health services were offered. It is important to highlight this year's great efforts to offer services and information, since these are the relevant factors in disease control and prevention. Most of these events offered free health screenings on blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, HIV, mammograms, papanicolaus, dental, sight and hearing examinations, mental health services, influenza vaccines, and general physical exams, among other services.

Activities include health fairs, conferences, workshops, sporting competitions, and cultural events, while providing relevant information and services in a linguistically and culturally appropriate manner. Events were organized in venues where the Latino population feels comfortable and safe. BHW also facilitated the collaboration of different Latin American consulates in the organization of events. Health information and services are incorporated with cultural and festive activities with music, dance, and Latin American food, as a way to celebrate health and life.



Health fair in Kern County, California



Sight examination in Kansas City, Missouri



Blood pressure test in Chicago, Illinois

The BHW in short



7 participating countries



1,784 health events



4,680 participating organizations



240,334 people reached



224,146 health services offered



2 educational webinars



4 main themes

Training and materials

The main themes that were covered during the XVI BHW were: Access to Health, Chronic Diseases (including obesity and diabetes), Infectious Diseases (including HIV and tuberculosis) and Occupational Health. In the BHW website (www.semanabinacionaldesalud.org) the regional coordinators had access to updated information and resources (available in Spanish) so that they could be shared with the event attendees.

In addition, training was provided to the BHW coordinators and to the organizations with whom they work regarding current health issues that particularly affect the Latino population. In 2016, thanks to the collaboration with the Hispanic Communication Network (Red Hispana de Comunicaciones), a webinar was offered regarding HIV and the National Latino AIDS Awareness Day (NLAAD). Also, with the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a Spanish videoconference on the Zika virus and how to protect the US Latino communities was held.



Zika Virus information stand in Miami, Florida

The BHW events were promoted locally and nationally in the mass media as well as through social media, such as Facebook and Twitter. Several local task force meetings were attended by media representatives, fueling their interest in spreading the word about the wonderful work that these agencies do during the month of October.

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Conclusion

For the last sixteen years, BHW has played a key role in the creation of collaboration and discussion opportunities among local, state, and federal programs, as well as health care providers seeking to improve the quality of life of the Latinos that do not have regular access to health care. BHW is a successful social mobilization model that aims to increase the health knowledge, access to services, and the promotion of public policies that benefit the Latino community. BHW lasts beyond the month of October, and it ensures that this hard-working population has access to a healthy life, regardless of borders.

Today more than ever, the collective effort of those who favor the health and well-being of everyone, regardless of their place of origin or their immigration status, has become even more essential. We believe that the health of a country is also the health of its immigrants, and this work must be done through organized, collective, and focused actions.

Health and Dignity for everyone!