Health Initiative of the Americas

The Health Initiative of the Americas (HIA) a program of the University of California Berkeley School of Public Health (UCB-SPH) was established in 2001. HIA draws upon the multidisciplinary scholarship and the moral calling of UC Berkeley faculty and students to produce new knowledge through action-oriented research; teaching and mentoring; and service and community engagement programs benefitting the migrant population of Latino origin in the United States.

HIA’s programs involve governments, academia, the private sector, and community-based organizations. HIA is considered one of the world’s leading programs on health and migration, instigating the largest public health social movement in the Americas with the endorsement of over 10,000 agencies and 20,000 volunteers.

**Action-oriented research areas.** Scientific-based activities to inform and influence policy changes and to produce new knowledge are currently operated by HIA through:

- **The Migration and Health Research Program (PIMSA),** the largest US-Mexico leading academic network of researchers and doctoral students generating scientific literature in this field; translating findings to inform decision makers, the media, and service providers; and producing health education materials for immigrants and advocates. Since 2003 PIMSA has financed 116 binational teams and 46 graduate students, distributed to 30 institutions in seven states of the United States and 45 institutions in 16 states in Mexico. Current partners are Mexico’s Secretariat of Health (SSA) through the US-Mexico Border Health Commission, the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT), the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM); the University of Texas at El Paso, the University of Arizona, and the UC-Mexico Initiative, Health Working Group.

- **The Migration and Health Research Center (MAHRC),** a collaborative program between UC Berkeley and UC Davis that conducts research and disseminates findings through social media and symposiums.

- **Resource Development Center,** the production of culturally sensitive bilingual resources for health educators, students, faculty, health providers, and the general public is guided from the premises that public health research should produce knowledge to forge improvements in the health of mobile populations.

- **Academic coordination of the Health Working Group of the UC-Mexico Initiative.** The goal of the Initiative is to create a sustained and strategic partnership between the University of California and Mexican institutions that addresses common issues and educates our next generation of leaders.
Training and Mentoring
HIA is a national leader in developing innovative culturally sensitive training programs to mentor those working with migrant and refugee families. These training programs are tailored to UC students as well as to health professionals and Promotores de Salud. Through our Summer Institute on Migration and Global Health, faculty, students and professionals working with migrant communities around the world learn about different health issues that affect mobile populations. International experts present on diverse topics from a multidisciplinary perspective.

In collaboration with the Autonomous University of Zacatecas (UAZ), HIA has developed two online training certificates for Promotoras in Nutrition and Occupational Health. HIA has also been involved in the development of two professional online training certificates through the UC-Mexico Health Working Group.

Service and Community Engagement Programs
Binational Health Week is a grass-roots movement, launched by HIA in 2001, that reaches over 300,000 underserved Latinos annually in the United States and Canada, through the leadership of the Secretariats of Health and of Foreign Affairs of the participating Latin American countries. This mobilization of thousands is recognized as the largest single volunteer effort to support the health and health care needs of Mexican and other Latino immigrants in the US and Canada.

Coordination of Transnational Governmental Relations
As a result of its bilateral agreements with the governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, and Peru, and communication and coordination with their more than 170 consulates in the United States and Canada, HIA is uniquely positioned to address, from a public health perspective, the health access disparities faced by immigrants from Latin America, and the opportunities to improve their lives.

Potential for Growth and Development
Now in its second decade of service and programs, HIA seeks to build on its outstanding track record of success and impact through stabilizing and strengthening its leadership and operations. Furthermore, we are committed to exploring new opportunities and partnerships to expand and diversify our resources to more effectively respond to opportunities that will improve the quality of life of the less advantaged Latino immigrants in the United States.

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