

# XIV: Bilingual Health Week

October 4-18, 2015

## General Report



•• Artist: Maestro Fulgencio Lazo ••

“Health is  
Movement”

Bilingual Health Week (BHW) was created 14 years ago as a response to health disparities of the Latino population living in the United States. Since then, thousands of Latinos that live in the United States and Canada receive information and free health exams every year during the month of October. This effort is a result of the commitment and support of the Governments of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Ecuador y Peru as well as thousands of agencies and volunteers in collaboration with the Health Initiative of the Americas (HIA), a program under the UC Berkeley School of Public Health.

BHW calls for a renewed commitment to eliminating inequalities in the social determinants of health, with a focus on addressing access to health services and insurance coverage, and the prevalence of certain chronic and infectious diseases that disproportionately affect this

population. Today, BHW has become one of the largest mobilization efforts in the Americas to improve the health and well-being of the underserved Latino population living in the U.S. and Canada.

The idea behind binational collaboration is that improving the health of the immigrants not only benefits the actual immigrants, but also has a positive economic and social impact in the countries of origin and countries of destination. During BHW, federal and state government agencies, community-based organizations, and thousands of volunteers come together annually in the month of October to conduct educational workshops, host health fairs and provide health screenings and medical insurance referrals for the most underserved. Besides this, BHW also focuses on implementing innovative strategies to improve the cultural competency of health care providers.

# Inaugural Event & Binational Forum

Every year, BHW is inaugurated by the Binational Forum on Migration and Health, an event that convenes key representatives from the United States; Canada, Mexico and Latin American countries to discuss how to better improve the health of immigrants and explore how to foster collaboration between countries. This year the official inauguration took place in San Luis Potosí, Mexico on October 6th. The event also served as the inauguration of the third National Health Week of Mexico and was led by the Secretary of Health of Mexico, Dr. Mercedes Juan, accompanied by representatives of different government sectors of Mexico, the United States and the rest of the participating Latin American countries.



Besides serving as the inauguration of BHW, the event was also a forum, which had approximately 200 participants including researchers, professionals and legislators from both sides of the border. The forum aimed to engage policymakers to put reducing health disparities of the Latino immigrant population at the top of the public-policy agenda. The topics covered during this year's forum included: Chronic Diseases, Infectious Diseases, Occupational Health and Access to Health Services.

## 2014 Results

The success of BHW 2014 is the result of the leadership and collaboration of a total of 111 consulates of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Colombia, Peru and Ecuador, operating in the U.S. and Canada, as well as various local taskforces.

Overall, over 300,000 Latinos benefitted from BHW events. Close to 1,600 activities were held and more than 223,000 medical services were provided including screenings for blood pressure, glucose, cholesterol, mammograms, flu vaccines and many more. Approximately, 3,500 agencies and 7,000 volunteers were actively involved in the planning and execution of the 2014 BHW events.

BHW Results 2014	
Number of Events	1634
Number of Persons Reached	300681
Number of Volunteers	6862
Number of Agencies	3507
Exams & Services Offered	223809



For many people, attending BHW events is the only opportunity they have during the year to check their health and receive free services. According to the reports provided by the participating consulates and task forces, the following services and screenings were giving during the 2014 BHW events:

<b>Breakdown of Exams and Medical Services</b>	
Blood Pressure	41204
Diabetes/Glucose	39745
Body Mass Index (BMI)	12162
Cholesterol	28462
HIV	4788
Vision	16539
Hearing	1476
Dental	19547
Breast Exam	1553
Mammograms	3907
PAP Smears	2108
Pregnancy Tests	11
General Check-ups	6074
Mental or Behavioral Health	3684
Flu Vaccine	30141
Other Vaccines	1180
Asthma	2058
Other Exams	9176
<b>Total Exams and Medical Services</b>	<b>223809</b>



These activities included health fairs, conferences, workshops, sports tournaments, where health services are provided in a culturally and linguistically manner. One characteristic of BHW events is that they are organized in places where the Latino population feels comfortable and secure. BHW also facilitates the opportunity for various consulates from different Latin American consulates to unite and collaborate to plan these events. Health information and services are usually combined with music, dances and typical food, as a way to celebrate health and celebrate life.

## Capacity Building

Every year, BHW organizers spotlight specific topics that are either current health disparities in the Latino community or have a significant impact on the Latino community. The main health issues for 2014 were: Access to Health Care; Chronic Diseases including Obesity and Diabetes; Infectious Diseases including HIV and Tuberculosis; and Occupational Health and Safety.

Since the BHW coordinators at the consulates are not health experts, it's critical to provide them a basic capacitation on the key issues of each topic and guidance on where to access relevant information they can provide during BHW events to the Latino population.



Thanks to the support of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, HIA offered four webinars prior to the month of October (one per each health topic) to the BHW coordinators and their local partners, as a way to improve their ability to promote health among the communities they serve. Besides this various agencies and organizations provided valuable printed and electronic educational resources in Spanish, which were posted on the Binational Health Week website ([binationalhealthweek.org](http://binationalhealthweek.org)) administered by HIA. In addition, HIA organized periodical conference calls with each consulate network, dedicated to offer guidance on the process of planning, executing and evaluating the health events.

Best practices were shared among participants, given that experience and participation varies among the BHW coordinator, some coordinators have been involved in BHW since its inception while others were involved for the first time. Collaboration among consulates from different countries located in the same city is highly encouraged, and over the years BHW collaboration has resulted in year-long collaboration and communication in other projects.



Growth and Impact of BHW 2001-2014						
Year	Countries	Activities	Number of Services	Population Reached	Agencies	Consulates
2001	2	98	N/A	18720	115	4
2006	5	1014	43349	300000	3000	37
<b>2014</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1634</b>	<b>223809</b>	<b>300681</b>	<b>3507</b>	<b>111</b>

## Conclusion

BHW is a collaborative effort between different countries and organizations that work together to improve the health of Latin American immigrants, independent of their country of origin or migratory status. Through dissemination of information, that is done through various forms of media, greater awareness of the importance of migrant health is built and serves to inform the public about the available resources in the community. Moreover, the free services offered during BHW to the uninsured population fits within national efforts to reduce health disparities and grants everyone who lives in the United States the opportunity to live a full and healthy life.

Population Reached by Country of Origin	
México	42%
Guatemala	12%
Honduras	10%
Colombia	9%
Ecuador	7%
Perú	9%
Brasil	1%
Otro	10%

## BHW 2014 Major National Partners

