Public Health Leaders Roundtable: Increasing Health Care Workforce Diversity starts with the Education Pipeline

In April 2011 the participants of the Public Health Leaders Roundtable defined health care workforce diversity as an area of focus. Before proceeding, the group decided that in order to discuss workforce diversity the education pipeline, from start to finish, must be explored.

On November 8th more than 35 public health leaders reconvened joined by several representatives from the education sector. Representatives were from the Little Rock School District, Arkansas Department of Higher Education, Arkansas Department of Education and the Arkansas Science and Technology Authority.

The AMHC Public Health Leaders Roundtable started with the premise of discussing minority health disparities broadly among Arkansas’s public health leaders. This roundtable was the third in a series of meetings in which participants are engaged in defining how the state should best move in order to address health care disparities.

“The current goal of the roundtable ‘series’ is to establish a collaborative network to address the issue of workforce diversity to increase the percentage of minorities practicing in health care professions,” said Dr. Idonia Trotter, AMHC Executive Director. “This focal point is very timely as Arkansas works toward improving the health care workforce as a whole,” she said.

Facilitators of the roundtable were Amy Rossi, vice president of Innovation and Strategic Development of the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care and Dr. Creshelle Nash, AMHC medical consultant.

Before opening the roundtable, Rossi set the stage and stressed the seriousness of the meeting. “We are not going away,” said Rossi. “The Arkansas Minority Health Commission has made a commitment to the issue of health care workforce diversity. This is not one of those meetings that leaves you wondering what was learned

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and what was next.”

Presentations and remarks were given by Neil Gibson, Ph.D. of the Arkansas Research Center; Gail McClure of the Arkansas Science Technology Authority; and Sadie Mitchell, Ed.D., assistant superintendent of elementary at the Little Rock School District.

Dr. Neil Gibson presented information regarding what happens in a child’s first five years of life. “Eighty-five percent of an individual’s social and cognitive development occurs before 5 years old,” he said.

Dr. Gibson provided an illustration of factors that could impact a child’s cognitive development; factors included economic challenges and developmental delays. “If we want to address healthcare workforce diversity, we have to do a better job of what’s happening in those critical years,” said Dr. Gibson.

Gail McClure gave an overview of programs available in the State of Arkansas that encourage interest in STEM studies. One of several programs highlighted was STEM Works, a pilot program created by Governor Mike Beebe and his Workforce Cabinet. STEM Works seeks to overhaul the ways in which Arkansas high school students receive STEM education and to increase the number of well-qualified STEM teachers. Colleges involved in STEM Works are the University of Arkansas Fayetteville, Arkansas Tech, University of Central Arkansas, University of Arkansas at Little Rock and Arkansas State University.
“It’s important that all stakeholders come together and know what is available in the state,” said McClure. “We need to be aware of the investments made in our state and know what our different education efforts are.”

Dr. Sadie Mitchell provided information on programs available within the Little Rock School District and background on how students began to lose interest in STEM studies.

“With the federal program ‘No Child Left Behind’ there was more emphasis on literacy and math and left out science and chemistry,” said Dr. Mitchell. “As a result the scores for science were very poor.”

Not only do economic and developmental factors affect a child’s cognitive abilities but environment also has an influence. Senator Joyce Elliott provided an impromptu presentation on Little Rock Promise Neighborhood, a program that will improve neighborhoods in Central Little Rock.

“We made a promise to parents that ‘we will do whatever it takes to make sure your children have happy, healthy and productive lives,’” said Elliott.

From environment to early childhood education and beyond, all of the topics discussed during the roundtable play a role in whether the healthcare system in Arkansas will be diverse.

Upon closing the roundtable Ami Rossi stated, “You’ve asked who is responsible for designing and implementing these programs and making sure that others know about them…well we all are.”

Senator Joyce Elliott

Dr. Sadie Mitchell, Assistant Superintendent of the Little Rock School District

Dr. Dan Rahn, UAMS Chancellor

Jannie Cotton, CEO Professional Counseling Associates

Gail McClure and Lillian Williams of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education
AMHC finds that providers are passionate about improving the health of residents

“We want people to live longer in Chicot County”

The AMHC presented a public forum in Lake Village, Ark., on October 20th. Public Officials in attendance were County Judge Mack Ball; Senator Eddie Cheatham, District 9; Alderwoman Sharon Walker; and Chicot County Department of Health and Human Services Administrator, Mary Warfield.

Arkansas Department of Health Regional Director, Dena Poteat provided a presentation on the county’s health rankings. The presentation revealed that out of 75 counties, Chicot County ranks #72 in health outcomes. This describes the overall health of counties in Arkansas; number one is considered the healthiest county in the state. The county ranks #73 in socioeconomic factors and #75 in behaviors (smoking and diet). However, Chicot County ranks #13 in clinical care and #5 in physical environment.

Chicot County has several programs and organizations available to improve health outcomes such as Star Health, a program partly funded by AMHC, the Birthing Project, Sister Friends and Mom and Me as well as a fitness center in the Delta AHEC facility.

“We want people to live longer in Chicot County and we want babies to be born close to full term and without disabilities,” said Poteat.

During previous quarterly public forums, the topic of mental health received overwhelming commentary and to address this, the Commission invited Ashley P. Graves, MEd, LAC, NCC, mental health counselor and owner of Lake Village Behavioral Health Center, LLC.

Graves stated that Chicot County has a shortage of access to services for adults and children with mental health needs and developmental needs.

“I’m working with teens who are depressed, suicidal or harming themselves,” said Graves. “We have to get the word out about the programs available to our residents.”

Commissioner Willa Black Sanders pointed out the obvious disconnect between the services available in Chicot County and the health outcomes.

Audience members stated that the "disconnect" is transportation and childcare. Unless an individual has Medicaid, that provides transportation, they are unable to take advantage of services. However, the Southeast Targeted Area Resources for Health program (STAR Health) administered by the Arkansas Department of Health in partnership with AMHC, has community health workers (CHWs) that circumvent this problem by taking the services to the residents.

CHWs make referrals to the Department of Health and Human Services, Cancer Society, Prescription Assistance Programs; assist with making appointments; find transportation and assist with completion of applications as needed.

Other topics discussed during the forum were the Affordable Care Act, cultural competence, breast care, STDs and trust of health care professionals among the residents.

The next day, the AMHC in partnership with the Chicot County Health Unit sponsored a health fair and mass flu clinic. More than 300 Chicot County and surrounding area residents took advantage of free flu shots and health information.

(1–4) AMHC Executive Director, Dr. Idonia Trotter, AMHC Commissioners Dr. Carolyn Mosley and Dr. Martha Phillips

Dena Poteat, Arkansas Department of Health Regional Director
Chicot County residents wait to receive a free flu shot.

More than 20 vendors provided health screenings and information to Chicot County residents.

Idonia Trotter with Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity members from University of Arkansas at Monticello who served as volunteers at the health fair.

Attendees and vendors exercise during the health fair lead by Mr. Jimmy “Get Better” Robinson.

One of the many residents taking advantage of the mass flu clinic.

Click here to see more photos from Lake Village.
World AIDS Day: 1000 Pledge to Get to Zero

AMHC takes message to faith leaders

The AMHC presented a World AIDS Day Gospel Awareness Concert on December 1st at St. Mark Baptist Church.

Educating through the church is an avenue encouraged by the AMHC.

"The church has an important role in educating the people," said Idonia Trotter, AMHC executive director. "Faith-based organizations have the ability to heavily influence knowledge, attitude, belief and behavior about health."

The theme for this year is "Getting to Zero." This is a global campaign launched by the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS. Getting to Zero means, Zero New HIV Infections, Zero AIDS Related Deaths and Zero Discrimination towards HIV consumers. Speakers were Dr. Trotter; Tina Long, ADH Section Chief of HIV/STD/Hepatitis C; Courtney Hampton of the Arkansas Department of Health, Reverend William Robinson of Theresa Hoover United Methodist Church, Rick Collins, chair of the Arkansas HIV/AIDS Minority Task Force, Senator Linda Chesterfield and Representative Fred Allen, District 33.

Education presentations and entertainment were provided by gospel artists Evangelist Lemmie Battles and Vashawn Mitchell who shared a personal testimony of losing 12 friends to AIDS. Emcee for the event was Billy St. James of Praise 102.5 who shared HIV/AIDS statistics with the audience.

During the event the audience was asked to recite a personal pledge lead by Dr. Trotter. After the event, the audience was asked to sign the 4 ft by 8 ft pledge. More than 1000 attended the event and made the pledge to "Get to Zero!!!
Emcee for the event Billy St. James of Praise 102.5 shares HIV/AIDS statistics.

More than 1000 residents of Little Rock and surrounding areas heard the facts about HIV and AIDS.

Click [here](http://www.arminorityhealth.com) to more photos from World AIDS Day.
AMHC Among Team Selected to Advance Health Equity in Arkansas

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provides opportunities for states to make lasting and comprehensive systems change in their approaches to achieving health equity for their most vulnerable populations. Through provisions in areas such as coverage and access, prevention, care coordination, population health, and quality and efficiency, the Act offers state policymakers a broad range of policy levers for improving health care and the health status of their racial and ethnic minority populations.

With support from The Aetna Foundation, The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP) selected Arkansas, along with 6 other states, to receive a grant to participate in the Learning Collaborative: Advancing Health Equity through Implementation of Health Care Reform. Other states in this collaborative are Connecticut, Hawaii, Minnesota, Ohio, Virginia and New Mexico. This initiative will provide a structured opportunity to integrate health equity initiatives across state agencies - specifically Medicaid, Public Health and Minority Health - and implement a cross cutting health equity agenda. Partner organizations include: Arkansas Minority Health Commission, Arkansas Department of Health, Arkansas Center for Health Improvement, Arkansas Department of Human Services, and Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health. Core members from each agency and interested citizens compose the working group which is tasked to address the following 3 state priorities as they relate to advancing health equity.

- Engaging Racial and Ethnic Minority Communities in Policy Development and Implementation
- Improving Eligibility and Enrollment Systems to Foster Participation of Racially and Ethnically Diverse Populations
- Use Your Data: Measuring Health Equity

This Collaborative is an opportunity for grassroots efforts to ensure minority communities play a role in policy development and implementation designed to advance health equity for all citizens of Arkansas. To join the conversation, all are welcome to the Health Equity Collaborative Meetings. Contact Glenda McNew at Glenda.mcnew@arkansas.gov for the next meeting date.

The Health Equity Collaborative held its first meeting on December 13th at UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health.

Audience member questions the team which states have had the most impact in terms health equity.
The Arkansas Minority Health Commission has partnered with Power 92, KOKY and Praise for the “Shape up Arkansas” challenge. The winner of the challenge will be announced during the Ask the Doctor radio show on Power 92. See Power 92, KOKY or Praise’s facebook page to follow your team for a chance to win a prize if your team wins!!

AMHC Quarterly Commission Meeting
January 20, 2012 • Camden, AR

AMHC Quarterly Commission Health Fair and Public Forum
January 20 and 21, 2012 • Camden, AR

Arkansas Minority Health Summit
April 20, 2012 • Philander Smith College, Little Rock, AR
Watch for further information

State Office Observances (AMHC will be closed)
December 23rd (Christmas Eve) • December 26th (Christmas Day)
• January 2nd (New Year’s Day)