

**Minutes of the January 29, 2009**  
***Minority Health Advisory Council (MHAC)***  
**10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**

**Members Attending:**

D. Ann Travis Honeycutt, M.D., Co-Chair (telephone)  
George Rust, M.D., Co-Chair  
Jaime Altamirano, M.D.  
Pamela Craft  
Katherine Cummings  
Chaiwon Kim  
Orlin Marquez

**Members Absent:**

Juanita Cone, M.D.  
Mel Lindsey  
Sonia Alvarez-Robinson  
Dan Salinas, M.D.  
Tish Towns

James Peoples, OHI Executive Director

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Co-Chairman Dr. George Rust greeted council members and OHI for the first time in 2009, and gave the floor to Co-Chairman Dr. D. Ann Travis Honeycutt. Dr. Honeycutt stated to the council that the Minority Health Advisory Council is making its mark in the health care arena for minorities and congratulated members for their work in 2008 and their expected work in the 2009. Council members approved the minutes from the November 12, 2008 meeting.

Executive Director James Peoples updated the council members on the Georgia Health Equity Initiative. He talked about the media coverage from the health equity report. A compilation of articles and other media coverage (radio, television, newsletters, web sites, podcasts and blogs) was distributed to members. Mr. Peoples stated that most of the feedback received on the report was positive. A summary of the concerns and questions posed at the Community Conversations was also distributed to council members. Some of the respondents shared information as to what they would like to see happen in their communities to help reduce the health disparities.

Mr. Peoples then asked the members to refer to the United Health Foundation Report, America's Health Rankings 2008 a report which was included in their packets. The 2008 report shows Georgia dropped by one point, from 40 to 41. The rankings are based on a number of determinants such as, personal behaviors, community and environment etc. as well as health outcomes, such as mental health, physical health, cardiovascular disease etc. Mr. Peoples asked the council Mr. Peoples asked if there was anything from this report the council would like to address in terms of the work that is done by the MHAC and the OHI.

Dr. Honeycutt responded that there were 2 items not directly related to health care that she wanted to uplift. They are 1) low high school graduation rate; and 2) high level of air pollution. Then she suggested that the council might want to take a look at the high incidence of infectious disease.

Dr. Rust stated that bumping up or down 1 rank is not really much of an issue and reminded members that Georgia ranked 43<sup>rd</sup> a few years ago, 40 last year and 41 this year. Mr. Peoples stated that it really takes a sustained long-term investment in health outcomes, status and disparities to see a tangible difference.

At Dr. Rust's request, Mr. Peoples briefed council members on the status of the proposed transfer of the Division of Public Health to the Department of Community Health (DCH), which will have a name change to the Department of Health. Mr. Peoples informed members that DCH is currently meeting with DHR staff to develop a plan to make a smooth transition. So, as of June 1, 2009, if approved by the legislature, the Department of Health will be ready. Mr. Peoples told council members that they would not be affected by the transition.

Mr. Peoples continued with the next item on the agenda, the potential impact of the President's Stimulus Bill. Under the proposed stimulus bill, Georgia slated to receive 4.9 billion in general funds which is separate from the money it will get for the Medicaid program. States will also be able to receive additional monies for "other health activities" under the Medicaid piece. All together, Georgia may receive between 11 to 13 billion dollars under President Obama's proposed Stimulus Bill.

Mr. Peoples stated that that is where the Office of Health Improvement and the Minority Health Advisory Council will fit into the plan. The Department will meet with Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) to discuss how funds can be utilized, for example, the Office of Health Improvement's Georgia Health Equity Initiative. OHI would like to expand upon the work done with the health disparities report to figure out ways to obtain more recent data; expand upon the health equity grant initiative to have a greater reach - more counties, more areas of need or increase number of grantees; and, develop and implement the fourth phase of the Georgia Health Equity Initiative - the "Georgia Health Equity Academy". The Academy is a training program that will be designed to help communities build local and regional health equity coalitions who would focus on addressing and reducing disparities at the local level.

Council members asked if the current Georgia Assembly is taking into consideration the President's Stimulus Bill while determining Georgia's budget. Mr. Peoples responded that the current legislature will design Georgia's budget as if Georgia will not receive the funding. In addition, the DCH proposes to implement a surcharge on hospitals and HMOs to fill the Medicaid gap. Governor Perdue included that in his proposed budget.

Dr. Honeycutt asked about the surcharge as to whether it be applied to physicians. Mr. Peoples responded that he doesn't believe that will happen.

**(Please note that the tapes for the meeting had stopped recording at this point. Therefore, approximately 30 minutes of dialogue was not recorded. The highlighted section that follows is adapted from notes taken by the OHI staff.)**

There was some discussion among the council members regarding pursuing a legislative statute for the MHAC as a long term assurance that the MHAC would stay in tact.

Dr. Honeycutt suggested that the direction taken by legislature would ensure a three-pronged that would ensure long-term of benefit in decreasing health disparities: 1) emphasis on quality, affordable,

portable health care for all; 2) modernizing to lower costs and improve health outcomes,; and 3) prevention and strengthening public health for all Americans and decreasing health gap for all.

The next agenda item focused upon Asia data update and supplemental report. Per Dr. Rust Gordon Freyman, DHR, was asked and agreed to run data and will make changes in the system so that racial categories under other would reflect the Asian population data. Currently, we know that approximately 70 percent of the other category is attributable to the Asian/Pacific Islander population.

Dr. Rust asked members of the council to support and agree by consensus that parties already identified would be responsible for the supplemental piece on Asian population to include (DHR, CPACS, and NCPC.) All present agreed.

Dr. Rust asked Kristal Ammons to update the council on the progress of the hospital survey that will be used to capture more detailed data on hospital visits. Council members requested additional information from hospitals to be included on the survey. Ms. Ammons referred members to the survey in their packets that will be disseminated to hospitals showing the additional requested information from the council. She stated that the survey has been completed and is slated to go live the week of February 1, 2009.

Dr. Rust informed council members that the data for the Asian/Pacific Islander population has been updated and ready for insertion into the disparities report and for on line. Ms. Ammons and Lynn Christian have already entered the corrections to the population data.

Dr. Rust asked Mr. Peoples to elaborate on the next item on the agenda, "Building Health Equity Coalitions/Georgia Health Equity Academy." Mr. Peoples began by stating the purpose of the academy which is a help train communities around health disparities and to get them more engaged. The council would sponsor or champion this effort. Mr. James stated that one of the outcomes from the Community Conversations was that people wanted to know how to bring community together - local county governments and legislators - to work on an equity strategy for their community. OHI will engage those groups whose functions are similar to that of the academy with the OHI to see what best fits for Georgia. He asked for the council to review and make recommendations for the curriculum draft. OHI will probably start by going to one region in Georgia for the implementation of the academy.

Dr. Altamirano recommended the involvement of the CDC to engage us with the academy. He suggested that OHI keep in mind that we are training people who then can train someone else.

Council member Orlin Marquez briefed council members on the progress of the MING (Medical Interpreter Network of Georgia) registry for medical interpreters. The proposed registry will compile and maintain a list of qualified medical interpreters in Georgia. Mr. Marquez referred members to the *Standards for Registry Enrollment of Medical Interpreters* document, which was adopted from the state of Oregon as a template or guideline which has been used in the development of MING's proposed registry. Mr. Marquez asked members to review the document and forward to him any suggestions they may have. Mr. Marquez specifically noted that council members should review MING's requirements to register individuals based on the following:

1. must be trained at least 40 hours;
2. verifiable experience (volunteer experience is permitted);

3. proof of some kind of testing is required; and,
4. continuing education.

Mr. Marquez would also like to receive input from the public on this position statement but want to limit the amount of feedback in order to get to a consensus. He requested the assistance of the council to recommend what population to request input from.

Mr. Peoples asked if MING will be maintaining the registry. Mr. Marquez responded that MING will maintain the registry and would like to do as much of it electronically as possible.

Council member Katherine Cummings informed members that the Georgia Rural Health Association will be sponsoring web seminars around mental health. One topic that will be included is cultural competence. She asked members to please send recommendations or referrals to her.

Dr. Rust then asked members for next meeting schedule date. Members decided to hold the next MHAC meeting on March 18, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.

There being no further items on the agenda, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

#### **Items for Follow-Up**

- ✓ James Peoples will send council members via email a copy of the language for liability to medical personnel providing healthcare services for free to Georgia's citizens.
- ✓ Council members will send Katherine Cummings recommendations for GRHA's webseminars as it relates to cultural competence.
- ✓ James Peoples will send the council the health equity academy document for their review and recommendations to assist in the development of the council.
- ✓ Orlin Marquez would like for council members to review the registry document and make suggestions. Suggestions will be forwarded to Marquez. He will review and discuss suggestions at the next meeting.