

## **Medical Leadership Council Press Release – May 2007**

### **Health Care Leaders Present New Research and Innovative Practices To Improve Language Access and Cultural Competence in Health Care**

Los Angeles (DATE) – The 32-member Medical Leadership Council on Cultural Proficiency met in Los Angeles May 30, 2007 to hear about new ways medical schools are working to increase physician workforce diversity and cultural competence, new research on the value of using trained interpreters in health care, and updates on proposed health care reforms.

“This is a critical year for health care in California,” said Ignatius Bau, JD, director of Culturally Competent Health Systems at The California Endowment, the council convenor. “We want to keep the concerns of language access, cultural competence, and health care for the underserved at the center of any discussions of major reform.”

The council, meeting since 2002, is comprised of the elected and staff leaders of California county medical associations, medical specialty societies, health systems, and advocacy groups. Its members work with organized medicine, physicians, patients, and health care staff statewide to improve language access for patients with limited English proficiency (LEP) and to improve cultural competence in the health care workforce.

At the May meeting, representatives from the University of California, San Francisco and Davis (UCSF and UCD) and the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California (USC) described successful admissions, recruiting and mentoring programs that are increasing the number of historically under-represented minority students in medical schools and promise to improve the cultural competence of all students.

Physician researchers from the General Medicine Clinic at San Francisco General Hospital and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology – Region IX (California) presented extensive published research showing that providing qualified interpreters significantly improves patient care and not providing language access severely compromises patient care.

Looking closely at the major health care reform measures pending in the California Legislature, advocates from the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network (CPEHN) presented recommendations for ways to improve and safeguard health care for people of color, people with limited English proficiency, and underserved communities.

Together, the member organizations of the Medical Leadership Council on Cultural Proficiency are working on at least three fronts – academic medicine, patient care, and health care reform – to ensure that all Californians have access to, and receive, the best quality of health care possible.

The Council's Policy Positions and streaming video of the May 30 presentations, along with speakers' handouts and publications, are posted on the Medical Leadership Council Web site at [www.medicalleadership.org](http://www.medicalleadership.org).