

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ELISEO J. PÉREZ-STABLE, M.D.
DIRECTOR, NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON MINORITY HEALTH AND
HEALTH DISPARITIES

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee: I am pleased to present the President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 budget request for the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

ADVANCING HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH

Medical and technological advances have afforded individuals with the potential for longer and healthier lives. However disparities between racial and ethnic minorities, rural, and disadvantaged socioeconomic populations continue to persist. NIMHD leads scientific research that advances understanding of minority health and health disparities. Understanding the complexity of health disparities requires examining how health determinants, biological, social, individual behavior, health system, and environmental factors interact with race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES) to influence health outcomes. For example, studies have shown racial and socioeconomic disparities in pain management, with African American and low SES patients less likely to receive first-line care. NIMHD currently supports a project that examines the use of computer-simulated patients and environments to assess, understand and alleviate pain treatment disparities that are associated with clinician bias. Findings from the study indicate that the utilization of virtual patients allows for greater exposure to racially and socioeconomically diverse patients than what can be found in traditional training settings. As a result, a significant decrease was found in decision making bias for how best to care for the virtual patient.

As the primary Federal agency for guiding and coordinating research to improve minority health and reduce health disparities, NIMHD has taken significant steps in setting a transformational agenda for the field. Recognizing the many factors that drive health disparities and overall health outcomes in minority health, NIMHD is completing a scientific visioning process that will establish a standard social-ecological-biological framework to advance the science of minority health and health disparities.

COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

A cornerstone of NIMHD's mission is to foster innovative collaborations and partnerships. In order to effectively address health disparities, a multidisciplinary approach involving community, academia, clinicians, service providers, and Federal partners is necessary. NIMHD has a long standing history of fostering partnerships both within and outside of NIH. For example, NIMHD supported Georgetown University, Howard University, and MedStar in their goal to eliminate breast cancer and stroke disparities by transferring knowledge from research to practice within a community setting. Advances of this collaborative effort have led to a community scholars curriculum designed to provide education in research engagement and capacity for community partner organizations to develop and maintain their own research and data systems infrastructure. This partnership also has strengthened the research workforce by developing a fellows program that trains, funds, and mentors students and early stage investigators who are pursuing careers in minority health and health disparities research. More

recently, NIMHD in collaboration with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, supported the establishment of an indigenous environmental health research center aimed at providing the Hopi and Navajo communities with the ability to conduct their own environmental exposure research. A unique approach to the study is the emphasis on identifying culturally appropriate research methods to be carried out by a multidisciplinary team involving American Indian researchers.

An ultimate example of collaboration is the launch of the Precision Medicine Initiative (PMI). PMI has afforded NIH with the opportunity to form a strong network among several of its Institutes and Centers. NIMHD plays a leadership role in the efforts to ensure that the establishment of the Precision Medicine Cohort includes standard measures of social determinants of health at baseline and exhibits the diversity necessary for the outcomes of the study to pertain to all Americans. Community engagement is vital to the inclusion of all health disparities populations and therefore, NIMHD has engaged researchers to conduct studies aimed at identifying biomarkers for disease progression (e.g., prostate cancer in African Americans) and drug response in diverse populations (e.g., asthma treatment in Latinos of different national origin) and to examine facilitators and barriers to implementing precision medicine findings in disadvantaged populations. In addition, NIMHD has been at the forefront of ensuring that community organizations are well-informed about the promises of precision medicine. Participation in three White House briefings, meetings and workshops with community organizations, and presentations at national scientific meetings are examples of NIMHD's commitment to engaging all communities in the Precision Medicine efforts.

ENHANCING DIVERSITY OF THE WORKFORCE

NIMHD recognizes a unique and compelling need to promote diversity in the biomedical, behavioral, clinical, and social sciences research workforce. NIMHD expects that efforts to diversify the workforce will lead to the recruitment of the most talented researchers from all groups into research areas relevant to the mission of NIMHD; improve the quality of the educational and training environment; balance and broaden the perspective in setting research priorities; improve the ability to recruit participants from diverse backgrounds into clinical research protocols; and improve the Nation's capacity to address and reduce health disparities.

As the U.S. population becomes increasingly diverse, reflection of that diversity among the biomedical research workforce is vital to the NIMHD research mission. To develop, maintain, and renew our scientific talent pool, it is imperative that we create a climate of opportunity to attract and retain the most talented individuals who can capitalize on innovation and advance scientific discovery. Research has demonstrated that a diversity of perspectives leads to better solutions to complex challenges, including healthcare research and education. NIMHD's commitment to enhancing the biomedical research workforce is evident in our continued support of the Loan Repayment Program, an annual Health Disparities course targeting early career investigators, Clinical Research Education and Career Development Awards, Research Centers in Minority Institutions, and our partnership in the NIH Medical Research Scholars Program. NIMHD's role in all of these programs has produced marked increase in the number of diverse scientists entering and persisting within the research arena.

CONCLUSION

Despite medical and scientific advances there continues to be a disproportionate burden of illness and disease among racial and ethnic minorities and other health disparities populations. Ameliorating these disparities in health outcomes is central to NIMHD's mission. NIMHD envisions an America in which all populations will have an equal opportunity to live long, healthy, and productive lives. Therefore, NIMHD remains committed to scientific leadership in coordinating and supporting highly meritorious research on minority health and health disparities with the goal of improving public health and promoting healthier lives.

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, M.D.
Director, National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities

Eliseo J. Pérez-Stable, M.D. became the director of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) on September 1, 2015.

Dr. Perez-Stable oversees NIMHD's budget to conduct and support research, training, research capacity and infrastructure development, public education, and information dissemination programs to improve minority health and reduce health disparities. NIMHD is the lead organization at NIH for planning, reviewing, coordinating, and evaluating minority health and health disparities research activities conducted by NIH.

Dr. Pérez-Stable's expertise spans a broad range of health disparities disciplines. His research interests have centered on improving the health of racial and ethnic minorities and underserved populations, advancing patient-centered care, improving cross-cultural communication skills among health care professionals, and promoting diversity in the biomedical research workforce. Recognized as a leader in Latino health care and disparities research, Dr. Pérez-Stable spent 32 years leading research on smoking cessation and tobacco control policy in Latino populations in the United States and Latin America, addressing clinical and prevention issues in cancer screening, and mentored over 70 minority investigators.

Prior to becoming NIMHD Director, Dr. Pérez-Stable was a professor of medicine and chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine, at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). He also was the director of the UCSF Center for Aging in Diverse Communities, which is funded by NIH's National Institute on Aging and director of the UCSF Medical Effectiveness Research Center for Diverse Populations.

Dr. Pérez-Stable was elected to the National Academy of Medicine (formerly Institute of Medicine) of the National Academy of Sciences in 2001. He earned his B.A. in chemistry from the University of Miami, his M.D. from the University of Miami, and completed his primary care internal medicine residency and research fellowship at UCSF.