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Special Communication

The Health of Latino Children

Urgent Priorities, Unanswered Questions, and a Research Agenda

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Latinos recently became the largest racial/ethnic minority group of US children. The Latino Consortium of the American Academy of Pediatrics Center for Child Health Research, consisting of 13 expert panelists, identified the most important urgent priorities and unanswered questions in Latino child health. Conclusions were drawn when consensus was reached among members, with refinement through multiple iterations. A consensus statement with supporting references was drafted and revised. This article summarizes the key issues, including lack of validated research instruments, frequent unjustified exclusion from studies, and failure to analyze data by pertinent subgroups. Latino children are at high risk for behavioral and developmental disorders, and there are many unanswered questions about their mental health needs and use of services. The prevalence of dental caries is disproportionately higher for Latino children, but the reasons for this disparity are unclear. Culture and language can profoundly affect Latino children's health, but not enough cultural competency training of health care professionals and provision of linguistically appropriate care occur. Latinos are underrepresented at every level of the health care professions. Latino children are at high risk for school dropout, environmental hazards, obesity, diabetes mellitus, asthma, lack of health insurance, nonfinancial barriers to health care access, and impaired quality of care, but many key questions in these areas remain unanswered. This article suggests areas in which more research is needed and ways to improve research and care of Latino children.

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Mexico School of Medicine, Albuquerque (Dr Greenberg); and Center for Child Health Research and University of Rochester School of Medicine, Rochester, NY (Dr Weitzman). Authors are the members of the Latino Consortium of the American Academy of Pediatrics Center for Child Health Research. After July 30, 2002, Dr Flores will be with the Center for the Advancement of Urban Children, Department of Pediatrics, Medical College of Wisconsin, MACC Fund Research Center, Milwaukee.

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