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Salud Americas '99 Conference

Leonard Karp*

* Philadelphia International Medicine

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Salud Americas '99 Conference

More than 120 visitors from Latin America, including the health ministers of Costa Rica and Columbia, the advisor to the finance minister of Mexico, and the health advisor to the president of Argentina, were guests in Philadelphia at the Salud Americas '99 conference on October 7-8, 1999. The conference was hosted by Philadelphia International Medicine (PIM), an organization owned by several area hospitals (including Thomas Jefferson University Hospital) whose goal is to establish Philadelphia as an international health care destination of choice. It works to promote the area's health care expertise, including hospitals; physicians; and medical education, health care administration, and health policy programs.

The conference provided an opportunity to share common health policy concerns as well as to exchange lessons learned as health systems undergo reform throughout the Hemisphere. The Philadelphia region served as a macro-model of health systems in transition, with speakers from Philadelphia International Medicine providing a summary of the regional changes in health care (for example, highlighting federal government reimbursement policy as a specific force for such changes).

David Nash, MD, MBA examined the forces that have stimulated change in this region. Considering the volatile financial climate in health care, Dr. Nash reported that quality can be improved and/or maintained while reducing costs by: 1) incorporating quality measures, 2) practicing evidence-based medicine, and 3) enhancing data collection and dissemination. Dr. Nash said that physicians are accepting of new treatment protocols, but data are needed to demonstrate that an alternative practice pattern results in better or less costly outcomes.

Andrew Wigglesworth, President of Philadelphia International Medicine, discussed the impetus for health system changes in this region, the long-term ramifications of those changes, and how other countries can learn from the experiences of hospitals and health systems in the United States.

Other speakers included: Robert Corrato, MD, Deputy Director, Office of Health Policy and Clinical Outcomes, Thomas Jefferson University; John Whyte, MD, Director, Moss Rehabilitation Research Institute; Paul F. Engstrom, MD, Senior Vice President of Population Science, Fox Chase Cancer Center; Susan Higman, Vice President, Managed Care and Network Development, Fox Chase Cancer Center; Ian Jones, MD, Senior Vice President and Chief Quality Officer, Crozer-Keystone Health System; Arnold Rosoff, Professor of Legal Studies and Health Care Systems, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania; and Leslie Davis, Associate Vice President, Marketing and Network Support, University of Pennsylvania Health System.

Collectively, the speakers represented different elements of the health care community in the region, including education, research, hospital administration, and clinical care.

As part of the conference, guests toured Thomas Jefferson University Hospital and the University of Pennsylvania Medical Center. At Jefferson, Jeffrey Lenow, MD, JD, led a discussion on the integration of evidence-based medicine into the physician practices of the Jefferson Health System. While at Penn, the participants toured the emergency/trauma center, radiology, and other units.

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Salud Americas provided increased international exposure to the Jefferson Health System and to the other members of Philadelphia International Medicine. In the coming months, PIM representatives will follow up with the contacts made at Salud Americas, including Latin American health insurers, government officials, and hospital administrators.

About the Author

Leonard Karp is the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Philadelphia International Medicine.