

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Health Care Delegation Hailing From VI Addresses Chronic Disease At National Forum

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ST. CROIX -- The University of the Virgins Islands partnered with Yale University to bring a five member U.S. Virgin Islands delegation to the Yale Global Health Leadership Institute (GHLI) Forum for Change, held from July 5 to 10, UVI announced on Thursday.

The goal of the forum, hosted by GHLI and the Eastern Caribbean Health Outcomes Research Network (ECHORN), was to support multidisciplinary teams in developing local strategies to improve the delivery of high quality care for people with non-communicable diseases. Health care providers and academicians discussed ways to improve the health care delivery system, including improvements in health systems capacity, policy, and planning.

Dr. Maxine Nunez, UVI professor of nursing and site principal investigator for USVI-ECHORN, who was a part of the five member delegation, invited representatives from the Virgin Islands to attend. Dr. Ken Okolo, chief operating officer at the Juan F. Luis Hospital, St. Croix; Charles Nickerson, senior vice-president of the Schneider Regional Medical Center, St. Thomas; Taetia Phillips-Dorsett, policy advisor at Government House, and Masserae Sprauve-Webster, chief executive officer of the Frederiksted Health Care, Inc., St. Croix, attended the forum. Delegations from Puerto Rico, Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago also attended.

A model of strategic problem solving was used to work through health systems challenges as multidisciplinary teams. The USVI delegation recognized that diabetes, along with hypertension, negatively impacts the health landscape of the territory in a significant way and addressing how to bring about needed change through policy and practice became the focus.

“Careful delineation of strategies and inclusive planning will give direction to the necessary efforts and dedicated resources for change over at least the next two years,” said Dr. Nunez. Other delegations have individually and similarly identified diabetes, childhood obesity, and alcohol abuse as targeted areas for intervention and change, she said.

ECHORN is a community-based prospective cohort study dedicated to expanding clinical research on chronic diseases affecting racial ethnic minority populations across the Eastern Caribbean. This cross-island research alliance includes Yale University, UVI, the University of Puerto Rico and the University of West Indies’ Cave Hill and St. Augustine campuses. ECHORN focuses on the rise of chronic diseases in the region, such as diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease.

The forum was hosted by Dr. Elizabeth Bradley, GHLI director, and Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, principal investigator for ECHORN.

Feature Image: From left to right: Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, Charles Nickerson, Dr. Ken Okolo, Taetia Phillips-Dorsett, Dr. Maxine Nunez, Masserae Sprauve-Webster and Dr. Elizabeth Bradley pose for a photo after the closing ceremonies of the Yale Global Health Leadership Institute Forum for Change.