Recruitment and Retention Critical to Minority Health Professionals

By John West
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Many observers believe that the cultural competency displayed by health care workers in all levels of an organization—or lack of it—has critically important effects on the quality of care received by that organization’s patients and customers.

Better education and training of staff currently providing services in health care systems and facilities could go a long way toward improving patient-provider interactions. Equally critical is improved recruitment and retention of minority students into health and allied health professions.

US Census projections indicate that by the year 2010, the U.S. minority population will increase by 60 percent.

Jordan J. Cohen, M.D., president of AAMC said, “this raises the question of whether or not enough medical students are developing the necessary cultural awareness and competence skills.”

According to Nycal Anthony, president of Alliances for Quality Education, Inc., a Washington-based, health and education resource development firm, there is not an automatic fix to building a more culturally competent health care workforce. “Balancing the supply and demand needs is essential,” she said. “To impact the education, recruitment, practice, and retention of physicians, pharmacists, advanced practice nurses, dentists, registered nurses, physician assistants, and other allied health professionals will require a ‘back to basics’ approach....”

“Young people, education systems, legislatures, and many others to identify and implement strategies to succeed,” she added. There must be a more open and meaningful communication and development across all levels,” he said. There must be a diverse cooperative pathway for success.

Minority groups listed are underrepresented in health care professions. Information can be found in United States Health Workforce Personnel Factbook 2000. This fact book is a compilation of data from secondary sources, such as the American Medical Association, and the Federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. To order, call the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) at 1-888-Ask-HRSA or visit http://www.ask.hrsa.gov.