

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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*****Press Release*****

Jacobi Medical Center Provides HIV Screenings in Recognition of National Latino AIDS Awareness Day
Jacobi's Award Winning Project BRIEF Joined the Fight to Raise Awareness on October 15th

BRONX, NY October 16, 2009 – On Thursday, October 15, Jacobi Medical Center's Project BRIEF program offered free Rapid HIV Testing and educational materials to the community in recognition of National Latino AIDS Awareness Day.

According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Hispanics/Latinos represent only 15 percent of the total U.S. population, yet comprise 18 percent of new HIV infections. Among Latinos, men make up the vast majority of new HIV infections (76 percent), but Latino women are also at disproportionate risk for HIV. They are infected with HIV at a rate four times greater than white women. The Bronx has been particularly hard hit by HIV, with up to 2 percent of its population living with AIDS and a death rate from AIDS that is nearly 10 times the national average.

In an effort to reach people who are most at risk for HIV, Jacobi Medical Center and North Central Bronx Hospital established Project BRIEF (**B**ehavior intervention, **R**apid HIV test, **I**nnovative video, **E**fficient cost and healthcare savings, and **F**acilitated seamless linkage to outpatient HIV care) in 2001.

Rapid HIV screenings through Project BRIEF are done in a nontraditional setting – the Emergency Department and urgent care area. Hospital emergency departments in inner cities usually treat patients who have no access to primary care and nowhere else to go for urgent medical help – which is why the ED is exactly the right place to reach people who are most at risk.

Since HIV screening requires an arduous patient consent process, doctors Yvette Calderon, MD, MS, Adult Urgent Care Director, and Jason Leider, MD, Medical Director of Adult HIV Services, worked closely with the Information Technology department to develop educational videos, in English and Spanish, which enable patients to give their consent for testing, and privately input sensitive information regarding high-risk behavior and sexual history.

Rapid testing provides results within an hour. If patients are HIV-negative but engage in risky behavior, they receive important risk reduction counseling. If they test positive, they are lined to clinical care immediately. A Project BRIEF public health advocate guides patients through the whole process.

“Our goal is clear. We want to uncover the disease process sooner, before people unknowingly transmit the virus to others,” says William Walsh, Senior Vice President of

The North Bronx Healthcare Network. “We’re not just saying to people ‘You should get tested,’ we’re also saying ‘If you test positive, we have the medical services and support you need and will get you into care right away.’”

From October 2005 to April 2009, 33,325 patients were approached in the Jacobi and North Central Bronx Hospital emergency departments and urgent care areas. 30,591 were eligible to consent for HIV testing, and 29,094 agreed to be tested for HIV. 134 were newly diagnosed. More than 70 percent of patients diagnosed as positive were eligible to start HIV treatment and more than half the patients on treatment have achieved undetectable viral loads.

In recognition of the progress made in diagnosing patients with HIV, Project BRIEF received a 2009 NOVA Award from the American Hospital Association (AHA). The AHA NOVA award honors hospitals and health systems that improve community health – whether through healthcare, economic or social initiatives- and that do so collaboratively, working with other hospitals and health systems or with community leaders and organizations.

For more information about Project BRIEF, please call (718) 918-5211.



Caption: Jacobi's Project BRIEF was recently honored with the American Hospital Association's 2009 NOVA Award. Pictured (l-r): Dr. Jason Leider, Medical Director of Adult HIV Services; Richard J. Pollack, Executive Vice President, American Hospital Association; Dr. Yvette Calderon, Adult Urgent Care Director; and William Walsh, Senior Vice President, North Bronx Healthcare Network.