



# UPDATE

FALL 2002

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 3

## *Cleveland, Columbus coalitions kick off immigrant health care campaigns*

In September, US Office of Civil Rights Equal Opportunity Specialist Marilyn Brusherd will keynote events in Cleveland and Columbus. Coalitions organizing the events are rolling out campaigns to empower Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals with information to obtain health care, and to educate providers about resources to help them serve immigrant patients.

### *Columbus event highlights importance of trained interpreters*

Brusherd will speak at a September 12 event in Columbus, entitled "Using Interpreters in Health Care: Ensuring Equal Access and Quality Care." Brusherd peppers her lively presentation about legal requirements with examples from real cases.

Presenters will offer several new Columbus resources for obtaining trained interpreters, including a new website - [www.interpreteraccess.com](http://www.interpreteraccess.com). Created by the InterpreterAccess Collaborative under a grant from Access HealthColumbus, the site allows registered providers to schedule trained interpreters on-line (or by phone). The event will also feature an overview of Columbus' new ethical and practice standards (developed by a committee chaired by UHCAN Ohio for InterpreterAccess). The standards, which will aid providers and the public in selecting and recognizing trained interpreters, are available at the InterpreterAccess website. After the event, attendees can meet over lunch with Marilyn Brusherd and the collaborative to discuss overcoming language barriers.

*Contact hours for nurses and social workers will be provided. Time: 10:30 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. Location: Columbus Health Department Auditorium, 240 Parsons Avenue. Cost: \$10 for those seeking contact hours, a suggested donation of \$5 for others, and an additional \$8 for those who wish to order lunch. To register, contact Kim Dill, at (614) 253-4340 or [kimdill@uhcanohio.org](mailto:kimdill@uhcanohio.org).*

### *Cleveland training covers interpreters, local resources*

The Cleveland Immigrant Health Care Access Coalition (organized by UHCAN Ohio) will present "Access to Health Care for Immigrants and Other Limited English Proficient Patients" on September 20, featuring Brusherd.

This program will address four topics: language assistance for LEP patients, necessary qualifications of medical interpreters, financial assistance for health care bills, and health care resources in Cuyahoga County. Participants will learn how to access health care, interpreters and financial assistance programs, for immigrants. The obligations of health care providers in regard to interpreters and language assistance will be covered, and participants will receive a health services handbook recently published by the coalition in multiple languages.

*Contact hours for social workers and nurses will be provided. Sponsors include UHCAN Ohio and The Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) School of Law. Time: 1:00 - 4:15 p.m. Location: CWRU Law School, 11075 East Blvd. in Cleveland. Cost: \$15 for those seeking 3.0 CEUs, free for others. To register contact Cindy Maxey at (216) 241-8422, ext. 19 or [cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org](mailto:cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org).*

## **Drug industry attempts roadblock as affordable Rx campaign goes to ballot**

*by Athena Godet-Calogeras*

Frustrated by the Ohio General Assembly's continuing refusal to even schedule Committee hearings on legislation to lower the price of prescription drugs for 2.2 million Ohioans without prescription coverage, the Coalition for Affordable Prescription Drugs announced in July that it will circulate petitions calling for an "initiated law." UHCAN Ohio is a

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## Health services handbook released in Cleveland

by Cindy Maxey

The Cleveland Immigrant Health Care Access Coalition, organized by UHCAN Ohio, recently published "Health Care Services for Immigrants and Others with Limited English Proficiency in Cuyahoga County." This handbook has been produced in Spanish, Russian, Arabic and English.

Immigrants and other language minorities suffer much worse health outcomes than the general population, in part because of language, cultural and financial barriers to accessing health care. While almost all immigrants are employed, few receive health care benefits on the job and Congress excluded most recent immigrants from the Medicaid program, beginning in 1996.

The handbook describes rights to health care for immigrants and obligations of hospitals and clinics to provide language assistance. It also describes qualifications for public financial assistance programs like Medicaid and Alien Emergency Medical Assistance (AEMA) and tells immigrants how to apply for them. In addition, area hospitals, primary care clinics and other health services are listed, with information about their interpreter services. Most of the 4500 copies are being distributed through social service agencies serving these language communities in the Cleveland area. This winter, the coalition plans to offer medical interpreter training with the InterpreterAccess Collaborative in Columbus.

To receive copies of the handbook, contact Cindy Maxey at (216) 241-8422, ext. 19 or [cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org](mailto:cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org).

## Godet-Calogeras leaves UHCAN Ohio

At the end of August, Athena Godet-Calogeras, UHCAN Ohio's associate director will leave the organization, but will continue her work as co-chair of the statewide Coalition for Affordable Prescription Drugs.

Athena's contributions to UHCAN Ohio have been many. She managed the organization's process of incorporation, obtained several foundation grants that grew and stabilized our budget, and professionalized our newsletter. Most recently, she helped to build the powerful labor-community coalition supporting affordable a prescription drug fair pricing act for Ohio.

Athena's dedication to health care justice, coupled with her skills as an organizer, educator, and writer, have served UHCAN Ohio well. We at UHCAN Ohio look forward to continuing to work with Athena on bringing affordable prescriptions and health care justice to Ohio.

## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This issue of *Update* features UHCAN Ohio's work to improve access to health care for immigrants. In addition to leaving over 40 million people uninsured, our health care system produces ever-widening racial and ethnic disparities in health status, due largely to language, cultural and financial barriers. In 1998, then-U.S. Surgeon General David Satcher called for eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in health by 2010. UHCAN Ohio believes action must come from the affected communities themselves.

In 1999, our staff organizer in Columbus interviewed scores of people in medically under-served communities to learn about unmet health needs. Meetings with activists in local immigrant communities led to creation of the Language Task Force (LTF). The first barrier the group took on was improving access to interpreters in health care. The resulting collaboration among hospitals, community health centers, and the community has led to significant improvements in interpreter access, and formation of the InterpreterAccess Collaborative.

LTF holds cultural competency training for providers to promote understanding about different cultures and beliefs. And, LTF also joined UHCAN Ohio's Free Care Campaign to improve access to financial assistance programs at hospitals for limited English speaking patients who are uninsured and scared of medical bills they can't pay. LTF and the InterpreterAccess Collaborative are reaching out to educate and involve providers and ethnic communities, beginning with a kick-off training/event in September (see the front page article).

Immigrant health access work is underway in Cleveland (see article) and Cincinnati, as well. We hope to inspire community groups around the state to engage their local health care systems in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in health care. UHCAN Ohio and its Language Task Force are ready to provide guidance to local groups. Contact us!

- Cathy Levine

## Every gift makes a difference ...

Grant funding is difficult to get for advocacy work – much of our work continues because of the generosity of committed supporters. If you believe that the work we are doing is needed and important, please use the enclosed donation form to send us your gift.

# UPDATE

**Update** is a quarterly publication of the Universal Health Care Network of Ohio (UHCAN Ohio).

**Editor:** Kim Dill ([kimdill@uhcanohio.org](mailto:kimdill@uhcanohio.org)).

**Phone:** 216-241-8422 **Fax:** 216-241-8423

**Cleveland Office:** 2800 Euclid Avenue, #520, Cleveland, Ohio 44115

**Columbus Office:** 1015 East Main Street, #302, Columbus, Ohio 43205 **Phone:** 614-253-4340 **Fax:** 614-253-4339 [www.uhcanohio.org](http://www.uhcanohio.org)

## UHCAN Ohio opposes for-profit orthopedic hospital

UHCAN Ohio has mounted opposition to a \$38 million, investor-owned, orthopedics hospital proposed for the exclusive Columbus suburb of New Albany. We are calling for a regulation process to protect the public from health care profiteering.

Because Columbus doesn't have a public hospital, its non-profit hospitals share in providing for the uninsured and meeting community needs. Uninsured care and vital but low-revenue services (such as trauma and burn care) are subsidized with revenue-generators such as ortho-

pedic and heart surgeries. The new for-profit facility, through its physician-investors, will skim low-risk, high-yield cases from the community system. "We believe that the proposed surgical hospital will weaken the safety net now in place for low income, uninsured and underinsured people in Central Ohio", said Patricia Dawkins, of Central Community House, speaking at a news conference in June.

Since abolishing Certificate of Need in 1995, Ohio has lacked any regulatory structure to determine the impact of

hospital construction on health care access, costs or quality. Thus, anyone can build a for-profit specialty hospital – as long as they have local physicians investing and referring patients to the new facility.

UHCAN Ohio supports regulation that provides public input, expert analysis of community impact, more public accountability, and limits on physician referrals to facilities they own.

*For more information on for-profit specialty hospitals and the need for regulation, visit our website at [www.uhcanohio.org](http://www.uhcanohio.org).*

### *Industry attempts roadblock, from page 1*

coalition member. The text and summary of a petition for a Prescription Drug Fair Pricing Act were submitted to Attorney General Betty Montgomery on July 2. In an attempt to delay the ballot campaign, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association of America (PhRMA) filed a complaint that the summary was deficient. The Coalition's attorney has responded to PhRMA's objections, and as *Update* goes to press, is awaiting Montgomery's decision.

As soon as the petition is certified, the Coalition will begin collecting 100,626 valid signatures demanding that the legislature enact an "initiated law," the Prescription Drug Fair Pricing Act. Once signatures are filed, the General Assembly has four months to adopt or modify, with the Coalition's approval, the legislation. If it does not, the Coalition will then have 90 days to collect additional signatures to put the law directly on the November 2003 ballot for a popular vote. For up-to-date information on the campaign, visit [www.rxcoalition.info](http://www.rxcoalition.info), or call UHCAN Ohio: (216) 241-8422.

### *UHCAN Ohio needs volunteers!*

If you want to make health care justice happen in Ohio, think about volunteering with UHCAN Ohio. We need committed individuals to serve on committees, conduct research, and help us with mailings.

Would you be interested in circulating petitions for our affordable prescriptions campaign? Could you collect stories from consumers who have experienced problems accessing health care? Or stuff envelopes?

If you would like to volunteer, please contact Cindy Maxey in the Cleveland office (216-241-8422, [cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org](mailto:cjmaxey@uhcanohio.org)) or Kim Dill in the Columbus office (614-253-4340, [kimdill@uhcanohio.org](mailto:kimdill@uhcanohio.org)).

## UHCAN Ohio calls on members to support BREAD assembly

UHCAN Ohio urges its members and supporters to attend the BREAD annual assembly in Columbus on October 1 to show community support for expanding access to health care. BREAD organizers are expecting attendance to exceed 1,000.

In January 2002, BREAD, a coalition of 43 Columbus-area religious congregations, voted to work on improving access to primary health care in Columbus. In April 2002, with 1700 people at Veteran's Memorial, BREAD won a commitment from County Commissioner Mary Jo Kilroy to work on a plan for increasing access.

With research assistance from UHCAN Ohio, BREAD has concluded that the best and most cost-effective way to provide comprehensive care to uninsured people is to increase the capacity of the Columbus Neighborhood Health Centers. Located in medically underserved communities, CNHC offers cradle-to-grave preventative care, management of chronic health conditions, prescriptions, dental care and referral to social services – regardless of patients' ability to pay. The health centers have a thirty-year national record of improving health among low-income people. But, CNHC lacks the capacity to meet local needs.

The County Commissioners and candidates are invited to BREAD's annual assembly to respond to the plan as presented. For more information about the assembly, call the UHCAN Ohio Columbus office at (614) 253-4340.

**UHCAN Ohio** is a member of **Community Shares of Mid-Ohio & Cleveland Community Shares**. Look for us in your workplace giving campaign if you choose to make a payroll deduction.

## *Cost burdens providers, task force created*

Title VI of the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires health care providers who receive federal funding (including Medicaid or Medicare) to provide interpreters to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) patients at no cost. This law is vital to ensuring that LEP residents receive equal access to care. It also ensures accurate communication and informed consent between patients and providers, protecting both.

However, providing trained interpreters is expensive. Local hospitals have invested considerable sums to ensure interpreter access. For non-hospital providers – especially community health centers and private physicians – the interpreter's fee can easily exceed the charge for the visit, especially for a Medicaid or uninsured patients. *Payers of health care – Medicaid, Medicare, private insurers, state and federal governments – must do more to reimburse providers for the costs of providing health care interpreters.* A statewide provider-community task force chaired by UHCAN Ohio has proposed to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services that it join at least five other states in paying for interpreters for Medicaid patients.



**2800 Euclid Avenue, Suite 520  
Cleveland, Ohio 44115-2418**

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Thursday, September 12, Columbus**

*"Using Interpreters in Health Care: Ensuring Equal Access and Quality Care"*: 10:30 a.m. – 12:45 p.m. Columbus Health Department Auditorium, 240 Parsons Ave. Features Marilyn Brusherd, Equal Opportunity Specialist of the U.S. Office of Civil Rights. See article on front page of this issue.

### **Friday, September 20, Cleveland**

*"Access to Health Care for Immigrants and Other Limited English Proficient Patients"*: 1:00 to 4:15 pm Case Western Reserve University Law School, 11075 East Blvd. Features Marilyn Brusherd, Equal Opportunity Specialist of the U.S. Office of Civil Rights. See article on front page of this issue.

### **Thursday, October 3, Columbus**

*"Linking Immigrants with free and affordable health care resources"*: 8:30 a.m. – noon Columbus Health Department Auditorium, 240 Parsons Ave. \$25. Contact hours available for nurses and social workers. To register contact Kim Dill at (614) 253-4340 or [kimdill@uhcanohio.org](mailto:kimdill@uhcanohio.org).

### **Late October, Columbus**

*"Getting the Word Out: Linking the uninsured with free and affordable health resources"*: \$25. Contact hours available for nurses and social workers. To register contact Kim Dill at (614) 253-4340 or [kimdill@uhcanohio.org](mailto:kimdill@uhcanohio.org).

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