



For Immediate Release

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Luis Diez Morales, M.D. and Marcus McKinney, D.Min, selected for national leadership program to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare

(Hartford/Boston – May 8, 2015) – Dr. Luis Diez Morales and Dr. Marcus McKinney of Saint Francis Care, Hartford, CT, have been selected to participate in a year-long executive leadership program designed to tackle racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

Drs. Diez and McKinney are among 60 individuals from 21 health care organizations from around the United States to be selected for the Disparities Leadership Program 2015-2016. They will join a cohort of over 120 other organizations who have participated in the Disparities Leadership Program from 2007-2015.

The Disparities Leadership Program is the first program of its kind in the nation, and is designed for leaders from hospitals, health insurance plans, and other healthcare organizations who are seeking to develop practical strategies to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in healthcare. The program is led by the Disparities Solutions Center at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston, Massachusetts.

Through the DLP, the DSC aims to create leaders prepared to meet the challenges of healthcare transformation by improving quality for at-risk populations who experience disparities. The program has three main goals:

- To arm healthcare leaders with a rich understanding of the causes of disparities and the vision to implement solutions and transform their organization to deliver high-value healthcare.
- To help leaders create strategic plans or projects to advance their work in reducing disparities in a customized way, with practical benefits tailored to every organization.
- To align the goals of health equity with health care reform and value-based purchasing

“This program is about developing new leaders and taking action. It is about helping individuals and their healthcare organizations understand the critical connection between improving quality and eliminating disparities in care through a concerted, coordinated effort to change our health care system,” said Joseph R. Betancourt, MD, MPH, Director

of the Disparities Solutions Center at MGH, and a member of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) Committee, which produced the 2002 landmark report *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*. This report revealed striking disparities in the quality of healthcare services delivered to minority and white patients -- even for patients of the same socioeconomic background and access to care. "These health care organizations are clearly distinguishing themselves as national leaders by taking action to identify and address disparities," Dr. Betancourt said.

"The *Curtis D. Robinson Center for Health Equity* was established to further Saint Francis' goals for achieving equitable care for those we serve in Connecticut. This leadership program promises to shape a clear, measurable plan for Saint Francis to address disparities in our health system," noted Dr. McKinney, who serves as Vice President, Community Health Equity and Health Policy at Saint Francis.

"This learning opportunity is uniquely designed to assist health systems like ours, committed to making a difference for our communities," said Dr. Diez. "The experience will help us incorporate best practices for direct care while planning ongoing strategies for quality and outcomes in Connecticut."

Created in July 2005 as the nation's first, hospital-based disparities center, the Disparities Solutions Center at MGH has significant experience in addressing racial and ethnic disparities in care. The Center has worked with several leading health plans across the country (Aetna, Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Florida, among others) to develop strategies to identify and eliminate disparities. In addition, DSC faculty have staffed the Massachusetts General Hospital Committee on Racial and Ethnic Disparities, pioneering activities such as the Disparities Dashboard, an innovative way to identify and monitor disparities, as well as the development of a culturally competent diabetes disease management program. The DSC faculty has also played an important role in the well-recognized effort among Boston hospitals to eliminate disparities under the leadership of the Boston Public Health Commission. These experiences have uniquely positioned DSC faculty to provide training to those interested in addressing disparities through quality improvement.

The Disparities Leadership Program is jointly sponsored by the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), and supported by Joint Commission Resources (JCR), an affiliate of the Joint Commission.