

Migration and Health Research Center (MAHRC)

Description:

The Migration and Health Research Center (MAHRC) is based at the University of California Berkeley and Davis campuses. The center's objective is to provide research leadership in the effort to improve the quality of life and eliminate health disparities of migrants living in California, the U.S., and globally. The center conducts and supports multidisciplinary research with the goal of creating new knowledge and translating it into policy recommendations to improve the health of migrant populations. A secondary goal is to increase the training of students and to stimulate key academics and visiting faculty to address critical issues related to migration and health.

To achieve these objectives, MAHRC promotes collaborative research partnerships and long-term linkages among U.S. universities, Latin American and other international research institutions, NGO's, and local, state, and federal government entities. The research efforts seek to understand the causes of illness and injuries among migrants/immigrants, thus providing a basis for developing strategies and policies to reduce the onset of diseases and increase and improve health care delivery for affected populations. Dissemination of results is targeted to academic, government, NGO and public audiences.

Resources and Structure

The Director is Marc Schenker (UC Davis) and the associate director is Xóchitl Castañeda (UC Berkeley). Administrative support comes from the UC Davis Center for Occupational and Environmental Health; and from the Health Initiative of the Americas (HIA), and the California Program on Access to Care (CPAC) School of Public Health, UC Berkeley. Core and affiliated faculty are located at the UC system and other key worldwide research institutions. Its advisory board is composed of key world-wide leaders in the field. MAHRC has developed strong ties with key organizations working with migrant population, which facilitates cooperative research, translation of academic findings into the real world, and interaction and training with health care providers, policy advocates, and decision makers.

Research and Direction

The primary effort is in-house conducted research on migration and health guided by social justice and human rights principles. This effort is driven by a strategic plan which includes a competitive development strategy to seek funding opportunities to support the research projects from agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; National Institute of Health; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; and public/private foundations. MAHRC also conducts research and/or provide information to partners that rely heavily on the information provided by the center. Additionally, MAHRC sponsors RFA grants to affiliated researchers for specific needs such as evaluation studies and reports, journal reviews and papers, fact sheets, policy briefs, academic documentaries and educational materials, among others. Internationally, MAHRC is seeking to contract with governments of Latin American countries that have important immigration flows to the United States.

The following topics are our initial areas of interest among migrant populations, but research will not necessarily be limited to these areas.

- mental health, including domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, and its relation with culture;
- chronic diseases and disease prevention, including nutrition related diseases such as unhealthy diets related to diabetes, hypertension, high cholesterol, obesity, cigarette smoking and other behaviors, across the age spectrum, and in particular where these health problems interlace with health disparities;
- occupational and environmental health and injury prevention, especially concerning day laborers and farm workers and environmental factors such as heat stress;
- access to services, including best practices of health prevention and promotion, such as *promotoras* outreach programs; strategies for expanding health insurance; legal issues related to access to health; and the uses of medical technology to reduce health disparities.

Public Policy

The research center uses the materials produced by RFA recipients and in-house researchers to meet with policy makers from local, state, and federal governments and advocacy organizations to provide them with compelling information related to the health of migrant populations and its political, economic, and cultural impacts on society at large. These efforts are done in close collaboration with HIA and CPAC.

Education

Students from UC Berkeley and Davis are engaged to learn research methods for health studies among mobile populations, and to work on appropriate MAHRC research projects. The Center also encourages student involvement in these efforts by fellowship awards and other efforts.

Primary Aims of the Research Center

- Conduct etiologic and demographic research on the health status and factors affecting the health of immigrant populations in California, the United States, and globally.
- Using a multidisciplinary approach, conduct research on health care policy issues related to immigrant populations.
- Promote collaborative research at a national and international level and create long-term linkages among U.S., Latin American and international organizations and academic institutions.
- Expand and facilitate a network of researchers and institutions from the United States Latin America and globally who can inform policymakers on issues related to migration and health.
- Leverage additional funding for research from foundations and research institutions.
- Broadly disseminate the results of research from the Center.