

## **Leah Betcher**

Biology, College Biological Sciences, 2008

*Mentor:* Kathryn Hanna, College Biological Sciences and Pilar de la Parra, Centro

## *Preventive Medicine: Using Education to Combat Health Disparities in the Latino Population*

With the rapidly increasing Latino population in the United States, it is necessary to address the health disparities afflicting this population. The lack of access to health care due to high rates of under-insured individuals leads to an inadequate supply of primary care physicians serving Hispanic people. In addition, the language barrier also plays a role in the onset and progression of many preventable diseases. My research has focused on the relationship between the Latino culture and a high-risk lifestyle for certain diseases such as diabetes, breast cancer, and Alzheimer's disease. For example, the tendency to fry foods in pots of collected fat can be one of the causes for the high incidence of obesity among Latinos. Furthermore, communication problems between physicians and patients may be a cause for the high incidence of problematic births. From my investigations, I hypothesized that through health education, many Latinos would become more informed on the risks, symptoms, and treatment of various diseases.

While interning at Centro, a multi-social service agency which serves the Latino population in Minneapolis and St. Paul, I lead educational discussions on various pertinent health issues in cooperation with faculty, other volunteers, and the American Cancer Society. We focused on three target audiences and planned presentations that would be beneficial to each group. Specifically, we prepared talks regarding hypertension, depression, and Alzheimer's disease to a group of senior citizens. In contrast, we focused on cervical cancer screenings, the dangers of lead poisoning, and dental care when addressing the pre-natal classes. Finally, a presentation on proper alimentation for children was prepared for a group of parents. The effectiveness of the discussions was then assessed with evaluations designed to help improve future presentations.



Poster Number:      Session: