

CONFERENCE ANNOUNCEMENT
April 28, 2022

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Johns Hopkins Centro SOL presents innovative approaches to mental illness

BALTIMORE—The Johns Hopkins Center for Salud/Health & Opportunities for Latinos, or Centro SOL, which works to advance clinical care, research, education and advocacy for Latinos in Baltimore, will hold a Latino mental health symposium Monday, May 16, and conference Thursday, May 19.

The symposium and conference will address depression among Latinos in Baltimore and follow the dissemination of lessons learned and best practices from a three-year Centro SOL project in May showing effective and sustainable outcomes to treat mild depression among marginalized communities, among other data. The study, symposium and conference will provide a framework that is actionable to tackle the mental health care needs of the Latino population in Baltimore and new or emerging destinations for Latino immigrants.

“In Baltimore, Latino immigrants with depression face obstacles to care that include stigma, lack of insurance, provider shortages and time constraints,” said Dr. Sarah Polk, co-director of Centro SOL. “In order to inform culturally appropriate approaches to depression treatment and stigma, we established the network composed of community members, health care providers and representatives of community organizations.”

Symposium: “Building a Network of Support for Mental Health: Depression-informed Services for Uninsured Latinos”

Monday, May 16, from 1 to 6 p.m. (in person only)

Through group discussions, lectures and role-plays, the symposium will equip community-based organizations, public agencies and other stakeholders with tools and skills to provide equitable and culturally relevant depression-informed services for uninsured Latinos in Baltimore. The symposium will stress the importance of building a safety net addressing depression, anxiety and other mental health issues in the Latino community.

Conference: “Mental Health Innovations for Immigrant Communities”

Thursday, May 19, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. (in person or virtual)

The conference will present an actionable framework for local health systems, community-based organizations and policymakers to use in addressing depression among Latino communities in and around Baltimore.

Dr. Roberto Lewis-Fernández, professor of clinical psychiatry at Columbia University, director of the New York State Center of Excellence for Cultural Competence and the Hispanic Treatment Program and co-director of the Anxiety Disorder Clinic at New York State Psychiatric Institute, will present the keynote

address. His research focuses on developing culturally valid interventions and instruments to enhance patient engagement, reduce misdiagnosis and help overcome disparities.

A conference panel will discuss providing for uninsured Latinos in the mental health policymaking process and include panelists Baltimore Councilman Zeke Cohen, Maryland Delegate Stephanie Smith, Johns Hopkins Health System's Nicki Sandusky McCann and moderator Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

A second panel will cover best practices for providing mental health care, prevention and treatment to marginalized communities. Panelists will include the National Alliance on Mental Illness's Kate Farinholt and Behavioral Health System Baltimore's Crista Taylor with moderator Carmen Alvarez, Ph.D., of the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing.

"Equitable access to mental health care requires a coordinated effort to respond to the unique needs of Baltimore's Latino community, a vital and rapidly growing population," said Monica Guerrero Vazquez, executive director of Centro SOL. "We invite community-based and faith-based organizations, policymakers, funders, students, faculty, health care practitioners, political leaders, researchers and members of the community at large to learn how to prevent, treat and reduce the stigma surrounding depression in the Latino community."

The conference qualifies as continuing education credits for health care professionals. For those not seeking continuing education credits, however, the conference and symposium are free to attend. To register, visit JHCentroSOL.org.

These events are supported by the Leonard and Helen R. Stulman Charitable Foundation and the Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute.

Centro SOL, or the Johns Hopkins Center for Salud/Health & Opportunities for Latinos, promotes equity in health and opportunity for Latinos in Baltimore by advancing clinical innovations, research, education, advocacy and outreach at Johns Hopkins and beyond in partnership with the center's Latino neighbors. Founded by physicians in 2013, Centro SOL joins with other organizations to hold over 60 events and serve over 12,000 Latino children and families in Baltimore every year. (JHCentroSOL.org)

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