

## Tips To Help Hispanics Get The Medicines They Need

(NAPSA)—Americans enjoy tremendous advances in health care. Unfortunately, not every citizen benefits to the same degree, particularly Hispanics.

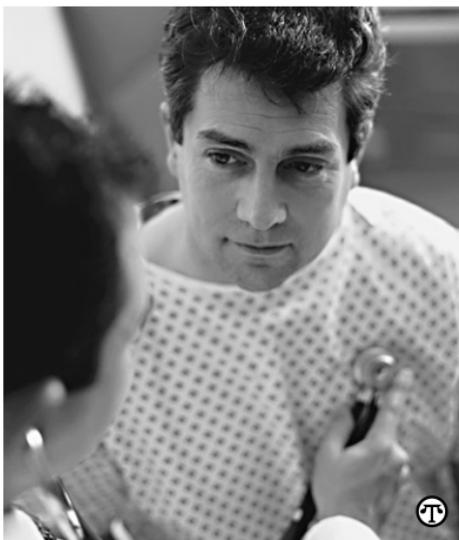
A report presented at the National Minority Health Month summit suggests that disparities in health care may be reduced by making sure minority patients have access to appropriate medicines and that those medications are taken properly.

Studies show that Hispanics are less likely to receive or use medications to treat illnesses, even though Hispanics experience high rates of treatable health conditions (such as diabetes, asthma, depression and heart disease). Patients with these illnesses may need to take their medication on a regular basis in order to feel better and lead productive lives.

The report, presented by the National Alliance for Hispanic Health, points out that cultural factors, like language barriers and patients' beliefs about medicines and disease, can affect whether a medication is taken properly. For example, a patient may stop taking the medication once symptoms have disappeared, even though many diseases must be treated on an ongoing basis.

Hispanics often have trouble getting prescription medicines because they are less likely to have health insurance than other ethnic groups. Many states offer programs that help pay for prescription medicines and pharmaceutical companies also offer medicine assistance programs ([www.helpingpatients.org](http://www.helpingpatients.org) or 800-762-4636).

Even patients who have insurance may find that their access to certain medications is limited. It is important that minority patients have access to a wide variety of medicines because genetic and environmental factors can influence how well a medicine works for a particular patient.



### **Cultural and language barriers can affect health care.**

The National Minority Health Month Foundation offers a few easy steps patients can take to make sure that they and their loved ones get the medicines best for them.

- **Talk to your doctor**—Make sure to share a complete medical history and tell your doctor about any other medicines or herbal remedies being taken. If there is a language barrier, find out if there is a bilingual staff member.

- **Understand how the medicine works**—Ask your doctor or pharmacist how often and how long the medicine should be taken and if it should be taken with food.

- **Be alert for unexpected responses**—Ask your doctor or pharmacist if any side effects can be expected from the medicine. If you experience unexpected side effects, call your doctor. You may need a different dose or a different medicine.

- **Ask about medicine assistance programs.**

Patients can feel better and live longer by learning more about how to care for their health conditions and taking their medicines as directed. To learn more, please visit [www.hispanichealth.org](http://www.hispanichealth.org).