

Women and Diabetes Town Hall Meeting - May 20, 2003

>>NICOLE JOHNSON:

As we move into the last section of the program, with our keynote address and other special guests I would like to introduce once again Dr. Cristina Beato. The moderator.

She's the principal adviser and assistant to Secretary of Health on health policy and medical and scientific matters.

She supervises the related programs and activities within the Department of Health and Human Services.

She assists in the direction of the eight public health service agencies of the department, provides leadership and maintains relationships with other government agencies and private organizations concerned with health.

Dr. Beato has dedicated her professional life to improving the health and well-being of individuals, families and communities.

She's focused on leading the department's efforts to reduce health disparities, to combat HIV, AIDS and champion women's health initiatives.

She's certainly doing that.

She's served on numerous boards including the American Association of Medical Colleges, the American Association of Family Physicians and the State of New Mexico medical association.

Plus she speaks four languages.

My goodness.

Please welcome once again, Dr. Beato for the final portion of the program.

[APPLAUSE]

>>CRISTINA BEATO: Thank you, Nicole.

Does anybody need some water or break or anything before we start our noon hour?

Great.

I think we have had an extremely exciting morning and most of all an educational morning.

Each of our distinguished guests here today have worked to improve the health of women.

Our speakers continue to add value to the fight against diabetes on both the community and the national level.

I'm proud to introduce this afternoon our keynote speaker.

The panel of speakers we'll have.

Most specifically Deputy Secretary Allen.

Deputy Secretary has been an incredible mentor and boss for me.

He'll be joined by the Congressional Caucus on Women's Issues as well as the Congressional Black and Hispanic caucuses.

Deputy Secretary Claude Allen with the Department of Health and Human Services works very closely with Secretary Tommy Thompson.

On all major policy and management issues and serves as our department's chief operating officer.

Many of you have seen him on the road talking about women's issues, AIDS and something close to his heart which is the elimination of health disparities in our country.

We all know that women, especially women of color, are much more affected by many of these diseases, by diabetes being one of them.

Before joining the department and before being appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, Deputy Secretary Allen served at the State of Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources.

He has three children now.

And on patients' rights.

He played a role in reforming Virginia's welfare system.

He has a strong commitment to getting out the prevention message and a strong compassion to eliminate health disparities.

Please welcome my boss, Secretary Claude Allen.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

>>CLAUDE ALLEN: Thank you, Cristina.

Good afternoon.

Good afternoon.

Make sure that you're on your toes and awake.

It is a privilege and honor to be here with you this afternoon and on behalf of the Department of Health and Human Services and our secretary, Secretary Tommy Thompson.

We have tremendous leaders in our department and Dr. Beato is one of them. She's a rising star not only in the health and services department but in the health community nationwide and internationally.

It is such a privilege to have her on the team.

And Nicole Johnson, Miss America 1999, as a dear, good friend.

An honor to be here with you.

Someone in her own right has championed the causes of women's health particularly in terms of diabetes.

An honor to be here with you as well.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a privilege to come to join you to talk on behalf of the Secretary.

Secretary Thompson wanted to be here today but he's in Geneva now at the World Health assembly and had to go there to work and he personally asked me to come and speak on his behalf.

As you know, Secretary Thompson is passionate about prevention and specifically about diabetes prevention.

He has made this one of the key initiatives at the department and I know that if he were here he would say many of the same things I'll tell you and talk with you about today.

That is that throughout our department there is a strong commitment to stem the growing diabetes problem in this country.

Especially among women and children in communities of color.

On the front lines of public health, there are some disturbing trends in the area of diabetes.

Over 9 million American women have diabetes.

That is over half of the 17 million Americans who have diabetes.

Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and a major contributor to heart disease, the number one killer of women.

African-American women, type 2 diabetes has reached epidemic proportions.

1 in 4 has diabetes.

Nearly twice the rate of white women.

African-Americans experience higher rates of at least three times of diabetes most serious complications, blindness, amputations of kidney failure.

25% of Hispanic women have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

American Indian and native women have almost three times of risk of being diagnosed with diabetes as white women of similar age.

Gestational diabetes appears in 2% to 5% of all pregnancies especially among African-Americans, Latinos, American Indians and native Alaskans.

We're seeing children experiencing type 2 diabetes at alarming rates.

It was unheard of just a few years ago.

Diabetes is taking more than just a personal toll on individual's health.

In February Secretary Thompson and the American diabetes officials announced a new study that said people who suffer from diabetes in the United States spend 2.4 times as much on their health care as people who do not have diabetes.

Further, diabetes cost \$132 billion in 2002.

Up from \$98 billion just five years earlier.

Clearly, diabetes is a problem that is growing and one that we must address and take action on.

It is important that we engage women in particular and I thank you all of you for being here today to do just that.

To address women in this country and the men who care for them and love them and support them to focus on the importance of this topic.

You see, women are not only a population greatly affected by this disease themselves, but they are also usually the parent who makes the doctor's appointments, decide what the family eats and encourages children to get off the couch and get off the computer and get out on the playground or the soccer field.

Women are the ones who are making many of the health decisions in our households today and it is vitally important that we connect with them so that they understand the importance of this problem and how they can take actions into their own hands to make sure that not only do they not contract type 2 diabetes but not something that becomes generational.

This is a problem that cannot be solved simply by government, which is why we need partners like all of you in this room today to help us in finding solutions.

Indeed, it will take providers, communities, churches, governments, indeed all facets of our daily lives working together to stem the tide of this disease and

all other diseases that can be either prevented or controlled with early treatment.

At HHS, Secretary Thompson always encourages us to work with partners. Today is a good example.

The American Diabetes Association is our co-host and the Congressional Diabetes Caucus collaborated with us as well.

In the audience and on panels we have experts, researchers, celebrities, and even some folks that are just interested in learning more about what they can do to combat diabetes in this country.

I want to touch briefly on several of our diabetes projects that we're working on at HHS.

In March the Secretary introduced the national public health initiative on diabetes and women's health.

It has been a collaboration between the CDC, the American Diabetes Association, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, the American Public Health Institution and numerous additional partner organizations.

The action plan provides us with a vision of a nation where diabetes among women is prevented or where it's on set is delayed whenever possible.

It outlines a feasible plan for making this vision a reality in our time.

We hope that the action plan will become a beacon for mobilizing the collective energies and resources of multiple entities to make a difference in the lives of women and their families who face the daily challenges of diabetes.

Again, Secretary Thompson is passionate about prevention of all diseases.

The president and secretary have begun steps to a healthy U.S. initiatives to encourage healthier diets and exercise as part of our routines.

The secretary is a strong example of this effort.

He keeps us all on our toes at the department to cut down on the cookies and making sure we're getting 30 minutes of exercise a day.

When he walks downstairs to the lobby out front you'll see people scattering because they don't want him to see them smoking in front of the building.

The secretary himself wears a pedometer to measure the number of steps he's taken each day.

He's lost over 15 pounds since starting his diet.

We can all learn from his example.

One of the things I spend much of my time on in the department is closing the health gap campaign to end disparities in health as we see in communities of color.

We're focusing on six health issues, areas that are ravaging communities of color today.

Diabetes is foremost among those but also infant mortality, cancer screening and management, heart disease, stroke, HIV/AIDS and child immunization and quality health care initiatives.

As I mentioned earlier diabetes is adversely impacting communities of color and women of color in particular.

A key part of the initiative is to urge Americans to get educated about healthy behaviors and to schedule a preventive checkup with a health care professional.

Just last week the department's office on women's health coordinated national women's checkup day and almost 700 community health centers, hospitals and on the providers joined us by offering their services.

This September 16th we're holding our second take a loved one to the doctor day in collaboration with radio personality Tom Joyner and ABC radio network. We're getting communities of color to take control of their health by providing education, encouraging them to visit the doctor and to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

I hope and expect that each of you will go back to your communities and contact your local ABC radio affiliate to find out how you can be involved in helping to close the health gap.

All these efforts are to help people to take control of their health care and to work to prevent disease before it even has a chance to occur.

Our states continue to be partners, key partners with us, in our prevention efforts.

I want to thank the members of Congress here today for their support.

I'm also happy to say that Secretary Thompson announced today that the centers for disease control and prevention is awarding money to the 50 states and the District of Columbia for diabetes prevention and control programs.

[APPLAUSE]

This \$27 million will allow states and territories to increase their diabetes prevention efforts and its use another part of what we are doing at the Department of Health and Human Services to help prevent diabetes across this country.

We have a lot of work to do, ladies and gentlemen.

I again want to thank you for being here today and for what you are doing to help.

Working together, we can make a difference in the lives of millions upon millions of women, men and children and the department stands ready to partner with you to do so.

I thank you again for allowing me the privilege of being with you today.

I look forward to working with all of you as we hope to make prevention a key word in everyone's household in this effort across the country.

Again, thank you and look forward to the conclusion of the conference.

[APPLAUSE]