



Hector Perez Receives PHI Innovation Award

OAKLAND, CA (January 11, 2011) – The Public Health Institute is pleased to announce that Hector Perez, MD, program coordinator of Puentes de Esperanza, is the recipient of the Adeline Hackett Innovations Initiative Small Grant Program for 2010 for a plan to stop the spread of multiple drug resistant tuberculosis (MDR-TB) among children.

The \$10,000 award will be used to test a model for diagnosing and treating up to 100 children living with or exposed to people whom the Puentes program is treating for MDR-TB, a form of TB that is particularly difficult and costly to cure. A bi-national project at PHI, Puentes de Esperanza diagnoses and treats individuals with MDR-TB in Baja California

“Children in a home with an MDR-TB patient are particularly vulnerable to this disease, which is spread through repeated exposure to droplets in the air,” said Mary Pittman, DrPH, president and CEO of PHI . “Dr. Perez’s plan to focus on children is very promising and honors the spirit of the Adeline Hackett award.”

Puentes de Esperanza has treated 40 patients with MDR-TB in Baja California since 2006, but has had no systematic model for preventing MDR-TB among exposed children and other family members. Perez’s project will test and treat children up to age 18 who have had an ongoing exposure to someone in the Puentes program for MDR-TB treatment. “Children who have early infection will be given the opportunity to be placed on treatment to prevent progression to MDR disease,” Perez said in his proposal description.

If the model is successful in preventing MDR-TB, it is likely to be folded into the Puentes program, Perez said.

“Our review committee was so impressed that on a very small budget, such an innovative project could be implemented,” said Elaine Zahnd of the Adeline Hackett review committee.

Perez was chosen from among 20 highly competitive submissions, the largest number of applicants since the grant program began in 2002. The award, given each year to a PHI principal investigator or project director, is named for former PHI board member Adeline Hackett, PhD, a renowned breast cancer researcher whose work led to an effective approach to detecting this form of cancer. Hackett believed that early financial support is critical to encourage the development of the kind of daring and innovative ideas that can further the public health field.