



**National Latina Health Network and Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases  
Launch National Pertussis Awareness Campaign**

*-- Campaign Designed to Educate the Latino Community About Whooping Cough,  
Adult Transmission to Infants --*

**Washington, D.C., May 1, 2008** – The National Latina Health Network (NLHN) and Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases (PKIDs) are pleased to announce their partnership on a pertussis awareness campaign within the Latino community. The campaign explains the dangers of pertussis, also known as whooping cough, and the need for adults and adolescents coming in close contact with infants to be vaccinated against it to prevent transmission of the disease.

Whooping cough is a highly contagious disease usually characterized by a severe cough. The disease is on the rise and is especially dangerous among infants. More than half of babies infected with the condition are hospitalized and 90 percent of pertussis-related deaths have been among babies younger than six months of age.

Through a series of both national and grassroots efforts, the Hispanic Pertussis Awareness Campaign will initiate a nationwide call-to-action, eliciting support from local leaders in Latino communities to help educate families about this dangerous disease. The first phase of the campaign launches today in Washington, D.C., with a roundtable established to unite community thought leaders and identify best practices to improve adult and adolescent immunization rates for pertussis.

“Increasing access to health education and quality care for Latinos is a critical priority, and stopping whooping cough is a part of our priority work,” says Elena M. Alvarado, president and chief executive officer of the National Latina Health Network. “Recent published data shows that social circumstances and environmental factors place minorities at a disadvantage in health and disease, which influences individual behavior, disease and health status. It is only through the collective efforts of key advocacy leaders and other champions for better health in the Hispanic community that we will be able to reach Latinos with information and tools to help them make informed health decisions.”

**Pertussis and the Latino Community**

The Latino community is especially at risk of pertussis infection. Scientific literature in the *Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine* cites Latino ethnicity as a risk factor for infant deaths resulting from whooping cough. The majority of the Latino community does not realize that Latino infants are contracting the disease at an alarming rate, primarily from their adult caregivers, whose immunity from their childhood vaccinations has worn off over time.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Immunization Survey identified that only about two percent of adults in the U.S. (ages 18-64) have received a booster shot against pertussis since 2005, when the booster first became available.

The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends that adults aged 19-64, particularly those who have close contact with a baby, be vaccinated with a single Tdap booster against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis. The ACIP also recommends the Tdap booster to protect adolescents between 11 and 18 years of age. In addition, vaccination is recommended for healthcare workers to help prevent the spread of infection to their patients.

Whooping cough has been on the rise in recent years and is the only infectious disease, for which children are routinely immunized, whose numbers are going up rather than down. In 1976, a record low of 1,010 cases were reported compared to 25,000 by 2004.

Often misdiagnosed as a cold, pertussis may be vastly underreported. In 2004, more than 25,000 cases were reported, but the number of annual cases may be nearly one million. To be fully protected against the disease, every child needs to get five doses of the DTaP vaccine by age seven. Whooping cough is spread through droplets from the mouth and nose when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.

Through the campaign efforts, adult and adolescent Latinos will be encouraged to speak to their child's pediatrician or their physician about the dangers of whooping cough and what they can do to stop the spread to infants.

For more information about pertussis, please visit [www.pkids.org](http://www.pkids.org).

#### **About NLHN**

NLHN (National Latina Health Network) is a non-profit organization that addresses critical health concerns affecting Latinas and their families. NLHN develops innovative health programs that help foster well-being and healthy behaviors and attitudes within the nation's Latino communities, as well as establish and promote leadership and community health partnerships nationwide. <http://www.nlhn.net>

#### **About PKIDs**

PKIDs (Parents of Kids with Infectious Diseases) is a national non-profit organization that supports families touched by infectious diseases. It also educates the public about effective disease prevention through the use of immunizations, standard precautions, handwashing and other strategies. <http://www.pkids.org>

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