

HERMINIA PALACIO, MD, MPH

Biosketch

Herminia Palacio applies a broad range of academic, clinical, and public policy experience to meet the diverse public health challenges of today. In January, 2003 Palacio was appointed to the post of Executive Director of Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (HCPHES), the local health department for approximately 1.8 million people.

Palacio received her medical degree from the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, where she was also inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. She completed her residency training at the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Primary Care Internal Medicine Program at San Francisco General Hospital. After becoming a Board Certified Internist, she obtained a Masters of Public Health, with an emphasis in Epidemiology, from the University of California Berkeley School of Public Health.

She spent several years on the faculty of UCSF, where she served as Principal Investigator or Co-Investigator in several federally funded and private foundation HIV epidemiology and health services research studies. She is an author of numerous articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and was featured in a permanent exhibit entitled “AIDS: The War Within” established by the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry in 1994. She currently holds faculty appointments at the Baylor College of Medicine and the University of Texas School of Public Health. In 2009 she was appointed to the National Advisory Committee of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholars Program.

In addition to her administrative responsibilities, as a local public health authority in the third largest county in the U.S. Palacio provides oversight for a wide variety of public health emergency responses. For example, she served as the Medical Branch Director for the Astrodome/Reliant Park mega-shelter operation for over 27,000 evacuees from Hurricane Katrina, as the Incident Commander for the public health response to many infectious disease incidents and environmental incidents, and is currently tasked with playing a lead role in local pandemic influenza preparedness planning.

Her early activities in the public policy arena have included service on the San Francisco Mayor’s Blue Ribbon Committee on Universal Health and the Mayor’s HIV Scientific Advisory Committee. She developed additional expertise in public policy during her tenure as Special Policy Advisor to the Director, San Francisco Department of Public Health. In Texas, she currently serves as Chair of the Harris County Healthcare Alliance, Chair of the Texas Public Health Coalition and served previously as President of the Texas Association of Local Health Officials (2005-2006). She is currently a member of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) Board of Directors, the NACCHO Chronic Disease Prevention Workgroup and several *ad hoc* NACCHO workgroups. Palacio was awarded the Excellence in Health Administration Award by the American Public Health Association in 2007.