

DR. LIGIA PERALTA INDUCTED TO MARYLAND WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME

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Washington, DC – On Tuesday, March 29, 2011 at 5:30pm, Ligia Peralta, MD will be formally inducted into the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame at the Maryland Senate President's Conference Room in Annapolis, MD

What: The annual ceremony is conducted by the Governor's Maryland Commission for Women to honor Maryland women who have made unique and lasting contributions to the economic, political, cultural and social life of the state and to provide visible models of achievement for tomorrow's female leaders.

When: The ceremony will start promptly at 5:30 pm EDT on Tuesday, March 29, 2011

Where: The ceremony will be held in the Maryland Senate President's Conference Room East I & II, Miller Senate Office Building, 11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, Maryland

Contact Person: Crystal Young, MSW, Program Coordinator, Maryland Commission for Women, 311 W. Saratoga St., Suite 272, Baltimore, MD 21201; Office tel. 410-767-3049; Office fax 410-333-3980; email: cyoung2@dhr.state.md.us

Brief Description:

Dr. Ligia Peralta, who has successfully combined her roles as pediatrician and adolescent medicine specialist, professor, researcher, and patient and community advocate, is honored for her pioneer and indefatigable work to fight the HIV epidemic among young people in Maryland and abroad. She has addressed the health disparities of HIV-infected and vulnerable adolescents by creating innovative programs to provide them with access to primary care services and research. She has led the youth HIV movement in Maryland by developing and evaluating community-based HIV prevention, education and testing programs, clinical services, and research initiatives for behaviorally HIV-infected adolescents and at-risk youths. Dr. Peralta developed the "One Stop Shopping" model of service for adolescent and young adults, which includes anonymous, confidential, and free HIV testing and counseling, specialized gynecological examinations such as colposcopy, sexual abuse counseling, substance abuse counseling and treatment, pharmacy, dental care, psychosocial, legal and human trafficking services, and research. This model of comprehensive care at a single site has been successful in engaging and retaining youth in care and has been recognized as a national and international model of care for programs seeking to provide services to adolescents.

She is the first Latina serving in the National HIV Task Force to establish treatment guidelines for children and adolescents. She has been invited to and has worked in Mexico, Thailand, Slovenia, Croatia, Brazil, Guyana, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and most recently in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She spearheaded the creation of an HIV agenda for her native country and helped create HIV clinical and research units for programs in five countries including Dubai and Guyana. Her voluntary work honors the memory of her father who passed away in 2003 and after whom she created Casa Ruben, a not-for-profit, to continue and expand her voluntary work.

Dr. Peralta's work has had an enduring impact on the practice of adolescent medicine on the care of youth with HIV, on

how we combine the fruits of science with compassion in service, on how to empower young men and women to be self-sustaining, and how to teach humane values to medical students and health professionals. This award inspires Dr. Peralta to continue and grow the next phase of her dedicated life.

Full Biography:

Ligia Peralta, M.D., F.A.A.P., F.S.A.H.M.

Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Epidemiology, Chief Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine, and Director of the Adolescent HIV Program of the Department of Pediatrics, University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Dr. Ligia Peralta, who has successfully combined her roles as pediatrician and adolescent medicine specialist, professor, researcher, and patient and community advocate, is honored for her pioneer and indefatigable work to fight the HIV epidemic among young people in Maryland and abroad. She has addressed the health disparities of HIV-infected and vulnerable adolescents by creating innovative programs to provide them with access to primary care services and research. She has led the youth HIV movement in Maryland by developing and evaluating community-based HIV prevention, education and testing programs, clinical services, and research initiatives for behaviorally HIV-infected adolescents and at-risk youths. Dr. Peralta developed the "One Stop Shopping" model of service for adolescent and young adults, which includes anonymous, confidential, and free HIV testing and counseling, specialized gynecological examinations such as colposcopy, sexual abuse counseling, substance abuse counseling and treatment, pharmacy, dental care, psychosocial, legal and human trafficking services, and research. This model of comprehensive care at a single site has been successful in engaging and retaining youth in care and has been recognized as a national and international model of care for programs seeking to provide services to adolescents.

Inspiration for her lifelong vocation came early for Dr. Peralta. Her father, Dr. Ruben Peralta, was the Head of Surgery and then Director for many years at the regional hospital in the heart of the Dominican Republic. A passionate believer in universal access to health care and in preventive medicine, he used all public and private resources at his disposal to provide the best possible medical services to all regardless of their capacity to pay. His remarkable spirit of public service included the many weekends when he would take his two young children to the most remote, mountainous areas of his country to provide free screenings and vaccinations. Those early experiences with her father forged her commitment to excellence through education and medicine in the service of others.

Her medical education started in her country at age 15, where she was one of six medical students to graduate (summa cum laude) from an entering class of one hundred. It was her successful treatment of a 13 month-old boy dying of tuberculosis during her rotations which narrowed her choice to pediatrics. Both the patient and his mother were malnourished and she noticed how the baby ate when he saw her (she lived far away and could only visit occasionally), so Dr. Peralta started stockpiling extra food for the Mother. "When she got better, he got better," she said, recalling how inspired she was when the baby stood up in his crib smiling. The remainder of her education and training was in the United States, but not before post-graduate studies in Switzerland and a scholarship from the Kellogg Foundation to participate in the prestigious Salzburg Seminar for American Studies in Austria.

In the United States, Dr. Peralta did her primary residency program in Pediatrics at the University of Connecticut's joint program with Yale University. She knew HIV would be her focus after seeing the beautiful smile on a young girl with HIV after she successfully treated her.

Dr. Peralta obtained her second specialty at the University of Maryland School of Medicine under Dr. Felix Heald, one of the pioneers in adolescent and young adult medicine in this country. She quickly became a faculty member both in Pediatrics and Epidemiology and became tenured Associate Professor. As Medical Director and later Division Chief of the Division of Adolescent and Young Adult Medicine, she spearheaded the movement in Maryland to find adolescents behaviorally infected with HIV by initiating community based counseling and testing units at places where youth gather. She was able to substantially grow State and Federal funding for research grants (over 50 Federal grants) in her field of HIV/AIDS, and multiplied the impact of those funds by building a series of collaborative networks throughout Baltimore City and the State of Maryland. Her commitment to research and scientific inquiry as the foundation of her clinical practice has combined with an outstanding leadership role in mentoring and increasing the number of women and under-represented minorities entering medicine and science.

Dr. Peralta is a successful investigator and for the last 16 years has been the Principal Investigator of the NIH-funded Baltimore Unit of the Adolescent Medicine HIV/AIDS Research Network and the Adolescent Medicine Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions (ATN I and II), and the CDC-funded Adolescent Impact study. Dr. Peralta's areas of research include primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs); HIV disease progression including AIDS fatigue; expansion of non-traditional ways of delivering care to special youth and Latino populations, and health disparities. She has received NIH-funds to lead her own investigator initiated research to study the acquisition of STIs in young women and their vulnerability to HIV. She is the Clinical Core Director of the UM Centers for Excellence in STIs conducting the first state of the art study on genomics of STIs.

Her voluntary work also honors the memory of her father who passed away in 2003 and after whom she created Casa Ruben, a not-for-profit, to continue and expand her voluntary work. Casa Ruben's volunteer work was recently recognized by the Governor's Office on Service and Voluntarism and the M&T Bank. With her many volunteers, that work has taken her all over the State of MD, including Baltimore, Howard, Montgomery, Prince George's, Somerset and Wicomico Counties, where she has organized and staffed countless health fairs and screenings. In the Eastern Shore, she initiated an adolescent summer clinic as well as annual physicals so low income students could benefit from summer camps. She also initiated the first Spanish Mini Medical School in Montgomery County for immigrants trying to reenter the field in this country. She serves as the Vice President of the Susana De Moya Foundation, which provides incentives for underrepresented minority / Latino students to finish high school and go on to college.

Nationally, Dr. Peralta serves on the National Pediatric and Family HIV Resource Center Working Group on Antiretroviral Therapy and Medical Management of HIV-Infected Children and is the recipient of the 2000 Latinos of Distinction Award conferred by the Food and Drug Administration and the White House. She is the first Latina serving in the National HIV Task Force to establish treatment guidelines for children and adolescents. She was twice elected by her peers as the Chair of the NIH-funded Adolescent Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Research. She serves in advisory and expert panels for NIH, Centers for Medicaid and Medicare, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Health Resources and Service Administration. In addition, she has consulted through the years for the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses, National Black Caucus of State Legislators, National Council of La Raza, and National Hispanic Medical Association. Dr. Peralta has also testified before Congress several times, most recently in preparation for national health reform legislation.

Dr. Peralta initiated her international work during medical school when she was selected to work with the United Nations on the oral rehydration programs in Latin America and Africa. She has been invited to and has worked in Mexico, Thailand, Slovenia, Croatia, Brazil, Guyana, Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, and most recently in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. She spearheaded the creation of an HIV agenda for her native country and helped create HIV clinical and research units for programs in five countries including Dubai and Guyana. Dr. Peralta has been a collaborator to the Pan-American Health Organization helping develop their Adolescent Health Strategy for the Americas. The US State

Department has recruited her to provide training in pediatric and adolescent health to its medical staff abroad in South Africa, Tunisia, Russia, Chile and the United States.

Dr. Peralta has authored numerous articles, book chapters and monographs on her research including the first paper ever written on adolescents' preferences for HIV testing, which lead to the use of less invasive HIV testing techniques and policy changes.

Dr. Peralta's work has had an enduring impact on the practice of adolescent medicine on the care of youth with HIV, on how we combine the fruits of science with compassion in service, on how to empower young men and women to be self-sustaining, and how to teach humane values to medical students and health professionals. This award inspires Dr. Peralta to continue and grow the next phase of her dedicated life.

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