

Thinking outside of one's cultural box can save lives, say experts

BY LAYLA GARMIS
THE CHRONICLE

A woman's race, culture and religious beliefs can all impact her health and wellness, a group of experts said last week during The Maya Angelou International Women's Health Summit at Forsyth Medical Center.

The Summit, held Sept. 27-29, was staged by the Medical Center's newly-opened Maya Angelou Center for Women's Health and Wellness and organized by Dr. Chere Gregory, Forsyth's director of neurosciences.

Dr. Evelyn Lewis, a retired Naval officer and nationally-recognized expert on cultural competency and health disparities, took part in the session "Cross-Cultural Barriers to Healthcare: The Global Experience for Women," one of more than a dozen topics covered during the summit.

She told attendees that it is difficult for health care providers to provide for a diverse patient population unless they have a basic understanding of the culture and beliefs of the patients they serve.

She used depression as an example. Generally speaking, Latinos tend to describe it as "nerves" and "headaches," while Asian Americans often report a sense of "weakness," "tiredness" or "imbalance;" Middle Easterners call it "problems of the heart" and African Americans often articulate it as "bad nerves" or "evil."

"If you think about the research that's been done around this, it suggests that cultural competency may, in fact, improve the patient-provider relationship," Lewis said. "...Being aware of these things as a provider of health care is definitely one of the ways that can help us provide better care."

Beth Dehghan, the executive director of Women NC and a human rights activist for more than three decades, described how



Beth Dehghan addresses attendees at the Summit Thursday.



Jennifer Thomas

with people who are passionate about the things that we're passionate about (at Forsyth Medical Center)," she commented. "... We're hoping that there'll be hundreds of people that will hear from our experts over the coming weeks."

The summit covered a wide array of issues and featured more than 50 speakers, who ranged from trained physicians to experts in fields like health policy, law, social policy and education.

"Our goal is really to work at improving women's health from every different angle," Gregory said. "...Everyone can have a role in making sure that the future for women and girls, in terms of their health, can be improved."

The event closed with an awards gala Saturday night, where awards were presented to Angelou, who selflessly lent her name to the Center; Kybele, a local organization dedicated to improving child-birth safety around the globe; Molly Barker, founder of Girls on the Run; and Camille McGirt of Healthy Girls Save the World.

For more information about the summit, visit www.mayaan-gelouhealthsummit.org.



Dr. Chere Gregory talks with audience members.

pointed to practices such as stonings and honor killings, when women are killed by their own family members, and genital mutilation, a practice still performed in many African nations and other places around the globe.

"One hundred forty million women and girls are currently living with the consequences of female genital mutilation," she said. "Female genital mutilation is a violation of human rights."

The session, held last Thursday, also featured Dr. Alex Vidaeff, a professor of obstetrics and gynecology at Baylor College of Medicine, and Dr. Kathie Cho, an assistant professor of Medicine at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

Wilson native Jennifer Thomas was among those who listened from the audience. A Forsyth Medical Center nurse, Thomas said she attended because she felt it would help her provide her patients with better care.

"I felt that if I came to this

summit then I can help more women of all cultures," said Thomas, who works in the Mother-Baby postpartum unit. "... I'm just happy that we have something like this for health care providers, just to make them aware and encourage them to try to incorporate that (cultural sensitivity) into healthcare giving."

The summit was also webcast for students at Winston-Salem State University, Salem College, Bennett College for Women and NC A&T State University, and recorded on DVD sets that will be distributed to med schools in China and Africa.

Gregory said she was inspired to put together the summit after presenting and participating in a panel discussion, "The Challenges of Rural Women: United States and Africa," at the 56th session of the International Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations.

"It's just been an amazing opportunity to have an exchange



RAMIVERSARY

OCTOBER 13 - 20

Saturday, October 13
7:00 p.m.

Homecoming Fashion Show

Host: B-Daht

K.R. Williams Auditorium

Stu. Adv.: \$7; Stu. Door: \$10; General: \$15

12:00 midnight - 4:00 a.m.

Homecoming Pre-Dawn

Featuring: DJ Drama

C.E. Gaines Gym

Stu. Adv.: \$13, Stu. Door: \$15,

General: \$15

Sunday, October 14
4:00 p.m.

Homecoming Gospel Play

Mama's Girls

Dillard Auditorium - Free with ticket only

Tuesday, October 16
6:00 p.m.

**Homecoming Lecture/
Poetry Showcase**

Host: Dasan Ahanu

Featuring: MC Lyte

K.R. Williams Auditorium

Stu. Adv.: Free; Stu. Door: \$5;

General: \$10

Wednesday, October 17
7:00 p.m.

Homecoming Comedy Show

Host: B-Daht and special guest!!!

Featuring: The Hudson Brothers and
Lil Duval

K.R. Williams Auditorium

Stu. Adv.: \$7; Stu. Door: \$10; General: \$15

Thursday, October 18
9:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m.

Red and Black Affair

Host: Kyle Santillian

Featuring: Pusha T and
Curren\$y

Millennium Center -

Downtown W-S

Stu. Adv.: \$20;

Stu. Door: \$25;

General: \$30

Friday, October 19

2:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

RAM Rave

Featuring: Da Reaction Band (Go Go)
Thompson Center Breezeway

Friday, October 19

Doors open at 6:00 p.m./
show starts at 7:00 p.m.

Homecoming Alumni Step Show

Host: Chico Bean

C.E. Gaines Gym

Stu. Adv.: \$15; Stu. Door: \$20; General: \$25



Be sure to check
www.ramhomecoming.com
for event updates.

For ticket information, call 336-750-3220

