



**John Joseph Prendergast, MD**  
**Recognition of Excellence: February/March 2005**

John Joseph Prendergast, MD is a physician specializing in endocrinology and diabetes in Redwood City, California. Dr. Prendergast's practice and research have led him to focus on the issue of diabetes in the Mexican-American population. Recent studies have shown that the prevalence of diabetes mellitus in Mexican-Americans in the United States is reaching almost epidemic proportions. Dr. Prendergast believes that, the problem for Mexican-Americans, in general, is twofold: limited access to primary medical care and severely restricted availability of specialized care required to meet modern treatment standards which may be further compromised by language and cultural barriers.

To address the lack of access of Latinos to diabetes care, he has developed an innovative approach, utilizing telemedicine to provide culturally sensitive state-of-the-art specialist care from remote sites. With this initial care model, Promotores, who are Latinos themselves, are given special training to function as facilitators. They serve as interpreters during the telemedicine sessions and provide an on-going communication link between their patients and Dr. Prendergast's diabetes specialist care team.

Dr. Prendergast believes that combining new technology with culturally sensitive programs can improve access to high-quality care and reduce the cost of diabetes care. The Promotora Telemedicine Project, an expansion of his current work, utilizes a telemedicine network to link diabetic patients in underserved areas with teams of physicians and certified diabetes educators who deliver state-of-the-art health care services. Care is assisted by a support network of Spanish-speaking facilitators who serve as a cultural interface between Latino patients and diabetes care providers. With this approach, the Promotor assumes an active and central role as facilitator in day-to-day diabetes management and self-care.

The Promotora Telemedicine Project addresses access, health and well-being, and multicultural health. The results of the project, to date, suggest that this model improves health outcomes. It also circumvents the long delays that Latinos currently experience in accessing diabetes care and the difficulty that overworked primary care physicians have in meeting new standards of diabetes care. Dr. Prendergast and his colleagues believe that their program represents the type of new initiative that can have a major impact on the growing health care needs and costs of the underserved Latino diabetic population of Santa Clara County. This cost-effective care model has application to large

underserved populations and provides a management program that can meet the pressing needs of patients for diabetes care.

Dr. Prendergast received his MD from Wayne State University College of Medicine in Detroit, Michigan and is currently an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of California Medical Center in San Francisco, California. Among his many activities, he is President of the Endocrine Metabolic Medical Center and the Pacific Medical Research Foundation. In addition, he founded and served as Medical Director for both Endocrine Therapeutics, Inc. and DiabetesWell.com.