Health Equity at the Forefront

For Claude Brunson, M.D., putting the issue of health equity at the forefront during his term as president of the Mississippi State Medical Association (MSMA) is a choice that echoes deep into his past.

As a child, he witnessed the way his grandmother filled the access gap as a traditional healer for her community in Auburn, Ala., during the 1960s. Seeing the impact she made helped to shape his desire to become a physician.

“You didn’t have access to physicians much in that day – and if you were poor and African-American, you had even less,” said Brunson.

READ MORE

MSDH Taps African-American Sorority Graduate Chapters in an Effort to Reduce Infant Mortality among Blacks in Mississippi

Physicians who have struggled to communicate the benefits of breastfeeding and the risks of co-sleeping to young African-American mothers may find those messages carrying more weight soon.

The Mississippi Department of Health Office of Health Disparity Elimination is partnering with National Pan-Hellenic graduate sorority chapters statewide to deliver messages aimed at reducing infant mortality among African Americans in Mississippi. READ MORE

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.”
~ World Health Organization
Black History in the Making Honorees

In honor of Black History Month, the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities celebrates the current contributions made by African Americans in improving health disparities. The theme, **Black History in the Making**, highlights individuals at the local, state, national and international level who have demonstrated a commitment to improving the lives of African Americans.

**Linda Dixon Rigsby, J.D.**

Local honoree, **Linda Dixon Rigsby, J.D.**, was selected for her commitment to securing access to affordable and quality healthcare for all Mississippians, especially individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Mrs. Dixon serves as the health law director at the Mississippi Center for Justice, a position she has held since November 2008. Prior to joining the Center, she was the assistant secretary of state for elections for the Mississippi Secretary of State’s Office.

Mrs. Dixon a member of the Mississippi Bar and the Magnolia Bar Association. She serves on the Southern AIDS Coalition Board of Directors, the steering committee of the Southern HIV/AIDS Strategy Initiative, and Board of Common Cause Mississippi. Linda is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Links, Inc. Mrs. Dixon received a bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Southern University at New Orleans and her law degree from Mississippi College School of Law.

**Robert Smith, M.D.**

State honoree, **Robert Smith, M.D.**, is the Executive Director of Central Mississippi Health Services, Inc. As a community leader and servant for the past several decades, Dr. Smith approached his life’s work in five distinct ways: physician, civil rights activist, researcher, educator and public policy advocate for the rights of all Americans to health care. Dr. Smith is a principal founder of the local and national community health center movement which led to the establishment of FQHCs in Mississippi.

He was a participant in national programs, such as Public Law 89239 which brought the advances of heart, cancer and stroke to the local community and later included renal disease, as well as President Johnson’s landmark White House Conference on Health. Dr. Smith was also involved in groundbreaking and landmark research as co-principal investigator of Arteriosclerosis in Communities (ARIC) at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMMC).

Dr. Smith is a Charter Diplomat and Fellow of the American Board of Family Medicine. He retired as a Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Family Medicine, at UMMC. He is also a former member of the Department of Community Medicine at Tufts University. Dr. Smith holds faculty emeritus status in Community Medicine at Brown University. He has served on several boards, locally and nationally, as well as received numerous recognitions, including two Doctorates of Humane Letters. Dr. Smith is married to the former Otrie B. Hickerson, M.D., and they have three children - Claude, Donna and Robert, Jr. - and two grandchildren.

“**The time is always right to do what is right.**”

~ Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., M.P.H.

National honoree, Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D., M.P.H., is Emeritus Professor of Epidemiology in the Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine. During her tenure on the Penn Medicine faculty she also served as the Associate Dean for Health Promotion and held a secondary appointment in the Department of Pediatrics, Nutrition Section. She has an interdisciplinary background and holds advanced degrees in social work, nutrition, and public health.

Dr. Kumanyika was the Founding Director of Penn’s interdisciplinary, multi-school Master of Public Health program. Her research focuses on identifying effective strategies to reduce nutrition-related chronic disease risks and health disparities. She has served as principal investigator or co-investigator on several multi-center and single-center randomized clinical trials or observational studies related to salt intake, other aspects of diet, or obesity. Many of her studies have evaluated interventions to promote healthy eating and physical activity in African American children or adults in clinical or community-based settings.

Dr. Kumanyika founded (in 2002) and continues to chair the African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN), a national network that seeks to improve the quality, quantity and effective translation of research on obesity and related issues in African American communities. She has extensive experience in advisory roles related to public health and nutrition policy.

Dr. Kumanyika is currently a member of the CDC Task Force on Community Preventive Services, Co-Chair of the Policy and Prevention Section of the World Obesity Federation, and a nutrition advisor to the World Health Organization, and president of the American Public Health Association for 2015. Dr. Kumanyika is a member of the Institute of Medicine.

Collins O. Airhihenbuwa, Ph.D., M.P.H.

International honoree, Collins O. Airhihenbuwa, Ph.D., M.P.H., serves as Professor and Head in the Department of Biobehavioral Health at the Pennsylvania State University and Director of the Pan-University Network for Global Health involving 13 Universities. As a global leader in research focusing on health, identity, and culture, Dr. Airhihenbuwa serves as a consultant to multiple NIH funded health disparity research grants and UN agencies including WHO, UNAIDS, UNFPA.

He is the author of the PEN-3 model used to centralize culture in public health and health promotion research/projects. He has written over 120 articles, book chapters, and books, including Health and Culture: Beyond the Western Paradigm (1995); the UNAIDS Communications Framework for HIV/AIDS: A New Direction (2000); Healing Our Differences: the Crisis of Global Health and the Politics of Identity (2007); and Ethnicity: Theories, International Perspectives and Challenges (2013) co-editor (with Agyemang and de-Graft).

Dr. Collins chairs the Advisory Board of the Global Philanthropy Alliance which funds projects in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. He previously served as a member of Board of Scientific Counselors of Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and President of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE).

Dr. Collins has received many honors, including, selection as a SOPHE Distinguished Fellow, Scholar of the Year by the American Association for Health Education, recipient of the Penn State Faculty Outreach Award, SOPHE mentor award, and Fellow of the American Academy of Health Behavior and the Academy of Behavioral Medicine Research.
Care Eliminates Racial Disparity in Colon Cancer Survival Rates, Study Finds

For the past two decades, the National Cancer Institute has documented a persistent racial disparity in colon cancer survival rates in the United States. African-American patients have consistently had lower survival rates when compared with white patients, despite a nationwide decline in colon cancer deaths overall. Now, a study by researchers at the Stanford University School of Medicine shows that more equitable delivery of evidence-based care can close this gap. READ MORE


Analysis of Key Breast Cancer Genes Reveals Distinct Profiles for African-American, European-American Women

Researchers have uncovered new information that may begin to explain why many African-American women are more likely to be diagnosed with aggressive, often deadly forms of breast cancer, which strengthens the evidence that increased dietary folate intake may prove to be an effective strategy for reducing risk for the disease in African-American women. In the first large study of its kind, the team, led by Roswell Park Cancer Institute (RPCI) epidemiologists Zhihong Gong, PhD, and Christine Ambrosone, PhD, identified patterns in gene variations associated with breast cancer risk that diverged significantly between African-American women and women of European descent. READ MORE


“Together we can make a world where cancer no longer means living with fear, without hope, or worse.”

~ Patrick Swayze

Many Breast Cancer Patients Lack Info on Their Cancer

Many women with breast cancer lack basic knowledge about their disease, such as their cancer stage and other characteristics, according to a new study. The lack of knowledge was even more pronounced among minority women, the study authors found. This finding is worrisome because knowing about a health condition can help people understand why treatment is important to follow, experts say. Although the study didn’t specifically look at the reasons behind the lack of knowledge, Dr. Rachel Freedman suspects that women may be overwhelmed when they’re initially diagnosed. READ MORE


Nutrition Intervention Leads to Dietary Behavior Changes in Latina Breast Cancer Survivors

An intervention designed to provide Latina breast cancer survivors with the knowledge and skills needed to change and sustain dietary behaviors helps survivors adhere to recommended guidelines to eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables. Using a culturally based hands-on educational approach, the program is geared toward Latina breast cancer survivors whose are at higher risk of high obesity rates, low physical activity rates, and poorer access to quality healthcare. READ MORE

Executive Advisory Board Member of the Month – Dr. Keith E. Whitfield

Dr. Keith Eric Whitfield is the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Duke University where is he is also a Professor in the Department of Psychology and Neuroscience, a Research Professor in the Department of Geriatric Medicine at Duke University Medical Center and the co-Director of the Center on Biobehavioral Health Disparities Research. He has published more than 160 articles, books and book chapters on cognition, health, and individual development and aging with a focus on African Americans. Dr. Whitfield’s research examines the etiology of individual variation in health and individual differences in cognition due to health conditions. Dr. Whitfield has an impressive track record of funding from NIH including a 14-year study of cognition among older African Americans, The Baltimore Study of Black Aging. Results from his studies have contributed to the literature on cognitive impairment, depression, stress and coping, hypertension, lung function, obesity, and mortality.

Dr. Whitfield has been an active participant in the scientific enterprise and a leader in his profession. He has served on a number of high-level boards and committees for NIH, the National Research Council, the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine and other research centers across the United States. Dr. Whitfield is a member of the editorial board for four different journals and an associate editor of *Experimental Aging Research* and the Special Section Editor on Health Disparities for the *Annuals of Behavioral Medicine*. He has also been an active member of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) where he has served as chair of the Behavioral and Social Sciences Section; chair of the Fellows Committee; and the Task Force on Minority Issues which published *Closing the Gap: Improving the health of Minority Elders in the New Millennium*. The GSA has recognized his contributions to discipline and the next generation of scientists by presenting Dr. Whitfield with the Distinguished Mentor Award.

Practical Solutions to Addressing Men’s Health Disparities: Guest Editorial

In men’s health research, an important gap exists in how we explain differences in health among men. Though scholarly contributions to men’s health disparities are growing, there continues to be a lack of discourse around concrete solutions that can be applied to reducing or eliminating differences in health outcomes between groups of men. Dedicated to describing strategies for addressing men’s health disparities globally and across racial and ethnic groups in the U.S., these papers represent a range of efforts to not simply explain men’s health disparities, but to describe interventions or findings in such a way that they inform strategies to reduce or eliminate men’s health disparities. **Read More**


The Health of African American Men: Implications for Research and Practice

Since the publication of the 10-volume Secretary’s *Task Force on Black and Minority Health* (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1986), it has been painfully obvious that collectively, African American men experience very poor health outcomes. Historically, life expectancy of African American men has consistently lagged behind that of Whites and most other racial and ethnic groups of men (Arias, 2006). Unfortunately, to date, more complete explanations offered to identify why African American men continue to experience poorer health outcomes have been limited (Jack, Tyson, Jack, & Sims, 2010). **Read More**

Dr. Mena Named Conference Co-Chair for the National HIV Prevention Conference

Dr. Leandro Mena is an Infectious Disease trained physician and experienced researcher in the field of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, with special interest in role that social determinants of health play in perpetuating these epidemics in sexual and gender minority populations. Dr. Mena serves as medical director of the Crossroads Clinic (publicly funded STD/HIV clinic), and Open Arms Healthcare Center (LGBT clinic) in Jackson, MS. Dr. Mena is an Associate Professor of Medicine, at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, and directs the Center for HIV/AIDS Research, Education & Policy at the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for Elimination of Health Disparities.

Blacks Account for More than Half of New HIV Diagnoses: CDC

Blacks are diagnosed with HIV more often than any other group of Americans, and while their death rate from the disease is declining, it is still higher than in other racial/ethnic group. Those are the findings of two new U.S. government studies reported Thursday. The findings show the need to redouble efforts to provide black Americans with better HIV prevention, diagnosis and care, the researchers, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), said. READ MORE

HIV/AIDS Patients in Deep South of U.S. Have Lower Survival Rates

A nine-state region of the US South has the nation’s lowest five-year survival rate among people diagnosed with HIV or AIDS, according to new research. Fifteen percent of people diagnosed with HIV and 27 percent of those diagnosed with AIDS in 2003-2004 had died within five years of diagnosis. Researchers say poverty, education, health insurance, social stigma and racism contribute. READ MORE


The Role of Stigma and Medical Mistrust in the Routine Health Care Engagement of Black Men Who Have Sex with Men

A recent study assessed how health care–related stigma, global medical mistrust, and personal trust in one’s health care provider relate to engaging in medical care among Black men who have sex with men (MSM). Twenty-nine percent of participants reported experiencing racial and sexual orientation stigma from heath care providers and 48% reported mistrust of medical establishments. We found that, among HIV-negative Black MSM, those who experienced greater stigma and global medical mistrust had longer gaps in time since their last medical exam. READ MORE


Pneumonia Risk Far Higher for HIV-Positive Children, Study Shows

HIV-positive children in developing countries are six times more likely to die from pneumonia than children without the virus, research suggests. The first global study into pneumonia deaths in children with HIV has found that, in one year, pneumonia affected 1.4 million children and led to a further 88,000 deaths. Researchers recommend that child pneumonia deaths could be dramatically reduced with improvements in early testing for HIV in infants, antiretroviral therapy (ART) for pregnant women and young children and vaccination. READ MORE


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Child Health Disparities

Widening Health Inequalities Among Adolescents, International Study Reveals

Over the past decade, rising national wealth across high-income countries has contributed to some improvements in health and well-being among adolescents. But the gap in health between rich and poor has widened, an international study of nearly half a million adolescents from 34 countries across Europe and North America has found. The findings, published in The Lancet, reveal that socioeconomic differences across multiple areas of adolescent mental and physical health increased between 2002 and 2010, with young people from the poorest socioeconomic groups more likely to be in worse health. READ MORE


Time to Rethink the Inner-City Asthma Epidemic?

Challenging the long-standing belief that city dwellers suffer disproportionately from asthma, the results of a new Johns Hopkins Children’s Center study of more than 23,000 U.S. children reveal that income, race and ethnic origin may play far more potent roles in asthma risk than kids’ physical surroundings. The study, based on comparison of childhood asthma rates in cities and outside of them, found no differences in asthma risk between children living in urban areas and their suburban and rural counterparts. The findings, published in the Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology, showed a surprisingly uneven distribution of asthma. READ MORE


Overweight, Obese Kids Achieved Healthier Weights After Participating in Head Start

Preschoolers who entered Head Start overweight or obese had achieved a healthier weight status than children in a comparison groups by the time they entered kindergarten, according to new research from the University of Michigan. The research, published in the journal Pediatrics, found preschool-aged children who entered Head Start with an unhealthy weight status experienced a significantly healthier body mass index (BMI) by kindergarten age than children in comparison groups being seen for pediatric well-child checks. Obese and overweight children had a slowing of excessive weight gain while underweight children had a needed increase in rate of weight gain. READ MORE


“\textit{We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.}”

~Stacia Tauscher

Four in 10 American Children Live in Low-Income Families, New Report Shows

Four out of ten American children live in low-income families, according to latest research from the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP). This finding underscores the magnitude of the problem of family economic insecurity and child poverty in the United States. The NCCP researchers found that 44 percent of children under age 18 lived in low-income families in 2013, and 22 percent lived in poor families. READ MORE


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Health Disparities Trainings and Opportunities

Research Training and Mentoring Program

Programs to Increase Diversity Among Individuals Engaged in Health Related Research (PRIDE) is an all-expense-paid research career advancement opportunity for early career faculty and transitioning post-doctoral fellows who are underrepresented in biomedical research. Faculty selected for this exciting program will participate in a two-year research training and mentoring program through Summer Institutes sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. HBCU PRIDE is one of seven training programs designed for faculty employed in Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) who are interested in obesity health disparities research. The deadline to submit a pre-application is March 1, 2015. If you are interested in learning more about HBCU PRIDE, please click here FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.

8-week Summer Program in Comparative Effectiveness and Patient-Centered Outcomes Research

In a time of accelerated scientific discovery, researchers are needed to translate research to the clinical setting. A national shortage of such investigators is well documented and specialized training is needed early in the career development process. Furthermore, with a continued national focus on comparative effectiveness research (CER) and patient centered outcomes research (PCOR) there is a growing need for training in these areas. Clinically-focused students in the earliest stages of training may have an interest but limited experience in research in PCOR, CER and related topics. LEARN MORE

Funding Opportunities

Interventions for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention in Native American Populations (R01)

Open Date: April 12, 2015
Letter of Intent Due Date: 30 days before the application due date Application Due Date: May 12, 2015

The purpose of this funding opportunity announcement (FOA) is to develop, adapt, and test the effectiveness of health promotion and disease prevention interventions in Native American (NA) populations. NA populations are exposed to considerable risk factors that significantly increase their likelihood of chronic disease, substance abuse, mental illness, oral diseases, and HIV-infection. The intervention program should be culturally appropriate and promote the adoption of healthy lifestyles, improve behaviors and social conditions and/or improve environmental conditions related to chronic disease, the consumption of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, mental illness, oral diseases, and HIV-infection. LEARN MORE

NIH Big Data to Knowledge (BD2K) Enhancing Diversity in Biomedical Data Science (R25)

The NIH Research Education Program (R25) supports research education activities in the mission areas of the NIH. The over-arching goal of this Big Data to Knowledge (BD2K) R25 program is to support educational activities that enhance the diversity of the biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research workforce. To accomplish the stated over-arching goal, this FOA will support creative educational activities with a primary focus on research experiences and curriculum development. LEARN MORE
One of our objectives at the Evers-Williams Institute is to collaborate with faculty, students, and other members of the internal and external community who are interested in interdisciplinary approaches to eliminate health disparities. Individuals interested in collaborative opportunities with the Institute are invited to apply for formal affiliation.

Three types of affiliations include:

- **Associate member** – UMMC faculty members
- **External members** – Collaborators from neighboring academic institutions and community-based organizations
- **Student/trainee members** – Students attending UMMC or other academic institutions

Affiliate members of the Institute will have access to individuals with: 1) content expertise in health disparities, social determinants of health, and program evaluation; 2) space for anthropometric and survey data collection; staff trained in qualitative methods (i.e., group facilitation, key informant interviews, focus groups); and 3) opportunities for student research and training experience.

**If you are interested in membership affiliation**, please submit your Curriculum Vitae (CV) to Deputy Director Michael L. Jones. He can also be reached at (601) 815-9693 or by email should you have further questions.

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**Ms. Ilyasah Shabazz and Ms. Reena Evers-Everett to Speak at Annual Black History Makers Forum**

Jackson State University’s Fannie Lou Hamer Institute will host its Third Annual Black History Makers Forum on Monday, February 16, 2015 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. The event will be held in the Dollye M.E. Robinson Liberal Arts Building on the JSU campus.

Ms. Ilyasah Shabazz, daughter of Malcom X and Dr. Betty Shabazz will deliver the keynote address. As an author, producer, and motivational speaker, Ms. Shabazz has captured her father’s transformative life experience in an edited volume titled The Diary of Malcolm X. Ms. Shabazz serves as the trustee of the Malcolm X & Dr. Betty Shabazz Memorial and Educational Center and the Malcolm X Foundation.

Ms. Reena Evers-Everett will speak at the Inter-Generational Dialogue beginning at 6:00 p.m. Ms. Evers-Everett (daughter of Medgar and Dr. Myrlie Evers) is currently the Executive Director of the Medgar and Myrlie Evers Institute which provides education and civil-engagement programs to show Medgar Evers’ vision on civil rights. This event is open to the public and refreshments will be served. For more information **CLICK HERE**.
Harper Lee to Publish Sequel to 'To Kill a Mockingbird'

"To Kill a Mockingbird" will not be Harper Lee's only published book after all. Publisher Harper announced Tuesday that "Go Set a Watchman," a novel the Pulitzer Prize-winning author completed in the 1950s and put aside, will be released July 14, 2015. Rediscovered last fall, "Go Set a Watchman" is essentially a sequel to "To Kill a Mockingbird," although it was finished earlier. The 304-page book will be Lee's second, and her first new work in print in more than 50 years, among the longest gaps in history for a major writer. READ MORE

Rosa Parks' Archive Opening to Public at Library of Congress

Rosa Parks, who refused to give up her seat on a segregated bus, reflected later on how it felt to be treated less than equal and once feistily wrote of how tired she was of being "pushed around" — parts of her history long hidden away. Beginning February 4, 2015 at the Library of Congress, researchers and the public will have full access to Parks' archive of letters, writings, personal notes and photographs for the first time. The collection will provide what experts call a more complex view of a woman long recalled in history for one iconic image — that of a nonviolent seamstress who inspired others to act at the dawning of the civil rights era. READ MORE

Buchanan to Lead Health Disparities Journal Club Meeting

Dr. William Buchanan, professor of periodontics and preventive sciences in the School of Dentistry and faculty affiliate of the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities at UMMC, will serve as the discussion leader for the next Health Disparities Journal Club session (formerly the Population Health Journal Club). The meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 from 12 noon-1:00 p.m. in the School of Nursing, classroom A140a. All Medical Center faculty, staff, and students are invited to attend. The journal club is sponsored by the Evers-Williams Institute. For more information, contact Felicia Bowens at 5-9019 or fbowens@umc.edu.

Selected peer-reviewed journal article for discussion:

Upcoming Conferences

79th Annual Mississippi Academy of Sciences Meeting
February 26-27, 2015
Thad Cochran Center
University of Southern Mississippi
Hattiesburg, MS
For more information visit http://msacad.org/mas/meeting-information

Save the Date: 7th Empowering Communities for a Healthy Mississippi Conference
May 20-22, 2015
Jackson Marriott Hotel
Pre-Conference Workshops
May 19, 2015
For more information visit www.facebook/empoweringcommunitiesconference

From Cataloging Health Disparities to Creating Health Equity: Effective Models to Equalize Outcomes
Xavier University of Louisiana College of Pharmacy's Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities, Research and Education will host its Eighth Health Disparities Conference March 12–14, 2015 in New Orleans, Louisiana. LEARN MORE

Effective Strategies to Improve Health Care for Hispanics in Our Local Communities
The National Hispanic Medical Association celebrates its 19th Annual Conference March 27-29, 2015 in Washington, D.C. bringing together experts from across the nation to share their multi-disciplinary experiences in improving health care delivery for Hispanic populations. Regular Registration ends March 17, 2015. LEARN MORE

Do you have a great idea that you would like to share?
Email us to submit content for our newsletter.

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