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Collaborating with Communities to Advance Research that Makes a Difference

By Tabia Henry Akintobi, PhD, MPH

As we begin the third year of our funding cycle, I reflect on our progress and all that lies ahead for the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC).

A year ago, we began conducting Understanding of Research Training (URT) in our partner communities, Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU) T, V, X, Y and Z. The trainings offered open and honest dialogue among over 150 neighborhood residents on the history of the wrongful treatment of people in research, improvements in community-based research, ethics, and information about MSM research and clinical trial opportunities. The URTs are designed to “Flip the Script” towards research, where community residents determine whether a researcher is eligible, through demonstrating community-engaged sensitivities, interests and relevance, to engage them in research. We also presented this model of research at the 2016 American Public Health Association Conference in Denver, Colorado.

We believe health equity means that no one should be disadvantaged from achieving their full health potential because of socially determined circumstances. Determining the community contexts of the strengths or barriers to achieving optimal health require on-going assessment. This year, our Community Coalition Board (CCB) will launch a community health assessment to identify traditional health disparity statistics and equally highlight the perspectives, preferences and priorities of community residents. Our Center is guided by what we learn and will share the findings with communities. We look forward to partnering with and hearing from you as we launch this process.

The theme of the MSM PRC is: Risk Reduction and Early Detection in African American and Other Minority Communities: Coalition for Prevention Research. As we expand our approaches to fulfill this charge through community engagement, we will work toward developing strong linkages with local leaders who are at the helm of supporting policy, systems and environmental changes. Learn more about our work through print, social and mass media by visiting us at:

http://www.msm.edu/Research/research_centersandinstitutes/PRC/index.php

In this issue:

- **Ms. Evonne Perdue**, CCB member and resident of NPU Z is also featured, sharing the progress and impact of Weight Loss=Health Gain, (pg 2)
- **Shawn Walton**, NPU T resident, and owner of WeCycle Atlanta is our featured CCB member. (pg 3)
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Through Adversity We Advance

Weight Loss Equals Health Gain

By Evonne Perdue

When it comes to adversity, none are immune. At Weight Loss Equals Health Gain we view adversity as a way not to hinder but to advance our community's growth.

Due to failure in our healthcare system, we endeavor to address social determinants of health. In our obesogenic society, it's time to stop and focus on what is causing more deaths in America, whether directly or indirectly. This urgency was initiated from a mini-grant funded through the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) in 2014. We realized community-based participatory research is an approach to give us authority, a form of community empowerment, according to Daniel S. Blumenthal, MD, MPH, Founding Principal Investigator of the MSM PRC.

Our task included organizing, conducting, encouraging and fostering grass-roots planning, participation and action. We have a diverse group of low- to middle-income participants, representing two out of three overweight American men and women, with one out of three who struggled with obesity. The objectives are to teach nutritional values of foods, healthier food preparation and the promotion of exercising more frequently.

Specifically, it is a program to effectively reduce and, ultimately, eliminate health disparities. It is our salient belief that positive morale along with a sense that "I am not alone" and "If you have a problem, me too!", is central to what we do.

Statistics related to our outcomes are: 60 participants signed up with an overall total weight loss of 236.3 lbs. We have had an average of 25 active participants per session. While 5 participants gained 2-10 lbs., 10% of participants lost 10-15 lbs. Fifteen (15) people no longer require their medications. Although there is more work to do, people with chronic health conditions, are finding help. With our DON'T GIVE UP, DON'T YOU EVER GIVE UP! motto, it's an effective intervention in reducing weight loss.



Evonne Perdue and members of Weight Loss Equals Health Gain speak about the successes of the program and how community can be engaged.

2016 MSM Community Engagement Day

By Dr. Natalie Hernandez, PhD, MPH

The Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) Office of Community Engagement (OCE) hosted the **2016 MSM Community Engagement Day**. This event was on Saturday, **September 17th** from **9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.** on MSM's main campus at the National Center for Primary Care. This day celebrated, recognized, and supported our community partners for the unique roles they play in giving everyone a chance to live a healthy life. The day's activities included resources, screenings, live entertainment, informational workshops, and games. As a valuable community partner, we hope that you enjoyed it and we look forward to the 2017 Community Engagement Day.



Project Happy: The Center's Core Research Project

By Cecil Powell, PhD, MPH

Project HAPPY (HIV/AIDS Prevention Project for Youth), the core research project for the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center, has been extremely busy developing educational materials and training our community health educators. Project HAPPY seeks to educate teens (14 – 18 year olds) and their parents about HIV risk reduction. The project works with teens and their parents in Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU's) T, V, X, Y, and Z.

Youth from the community have been a very important part of Project HAPPY. We have a teen advisory committee made up of students who attend Booker T. Washington High School, Carver High School, and South Atlanta High School. The members of the teen advisory committee are Sumayyah Sayyad, Xavier Jackson, Shay Locklin, Tiye' Ridley, Dgeneba Keita, and Christian Harris. The teen advisory committee has helped us update our educational materials for today's teens, train our community health educators, and educate the community about the project. The teen panel meets on a regular basis to offer advice about reaching teens in their community.

If you would like to learn more about Project HAPPY, contact Romell Phillips at 404-752-8845 or via email at rphillips@msm.edu.



Teen panel members Shay and Xavier, along with Dr. Lamonte Powell, at the MSM PRC Community Meet and Greet

Youth & Seniors Engaged Highlighting Our Diversity

By Shawn Walton

This season with the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) has been a blast! In partnership with the institution's PRC and Community Coalition Board (CCB) the spectrum of youth and seniors engaged highlighted our diversity and cooperation.

Through the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (R.E.A.C.H.) grant efforts, Wecycle Atlanta was able to engage youth and community members in an unprecedented way. This year we were able to use our bicycle shop as a meeting space to create greater access to the Complete Streets Policy WorkGroup. This brought meetings right at the West End Park where parents and youth convene daily. Also, we were trained in Healthy Corner Stores recruitment by our Georgia State University Partners. Just imagine a "Ride Along" type scenario going to shake down a corner store partner to get them signed up to bolster their healthy food selection through our promotional packets. It was quite the experience. Now, fully equipped to be a better advocate for a broader selection of fresh, low sodium, and local foods in health corner stores, I look forward to many new seasons of better selections of foods in minority communities.



A New Model for Patient Care

By Adrianne Proeller

Have you heard of a Patient-Centered Medical Home – or a PCMH? This is a new model for patient care that ensures patients' and families' needs are always a priority. Clinics that earn this status make sure the patient has the best experiences in improved medical care. Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) is offering free workshops, led by Community Health Workers (CHW), to share more about PCMHs and local clinics they can access.

The passage of the Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare, prompted a fundamental change in the way community health centers across the nation provided care to all patients. The legislation works to ensure that community clinics provide high-quality services to patients at an affordable cost. It's all about you – the patient.

The PCMH model is designed to improve quality of care through:

- team-based coordination of care (doctors, nurses, social workers, etc.)
- increasing prompt access to care (appointment times, telephone, emails)
- empowering the patient and their families to be partners in their own care

These are only a few examples. Please contact David Collins, Assistant Director, PRC Community Development/Liaison, at 404-752-1139 for more information on scheduling a PCMH presentation in Neighborhood Planning Units T, V, X, Y, and Z.



The Minority Men's Oral and Dental Health Program (MOHDAP)

By Calvin McAllister, MPH
and Jaasiel Smith

As part of a planning grant, through the DentaQuest Foundation, The Minority Men's Oral and Dental Health Program (MOHDAP) was an intervention targeted to recruit, educate and empower African American men ages 21 and over about the importance of good oral health and its relationship to overall health. The Pittsburgh Community Improvement Association (PCIA) in partnership with the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center (MSM PRC) was able to successfully complete a pilot phase where 50 African American men from NPUs V, X, Y and Z were educated about oral health and its importance. Results of this study showed that the oral health knowledge and attitudes of Black men can be improved through the use of educational interventions that demonstrate the importance of oral health and its relationship to chronic disease and other health conditions, to improve the overall quality of life. Study results expand the evidence on the effectiveness of oral health educational intervention through a focus on the key components and approaches to effective interventions designed for Black Men. Results also demonstrate that community-based participatory approaches increase recruitment, sustain retention and empower participants towards community ownership, thus contributing to improved overall health. The results also demonstrate that Black men were highly satisfied with this approach. Additionally, this study

demonstrated that community-academic partnerships are feasible and integral to addressing oral health disparities among Black men. Finally, while oral health knowledge is central to increased awareness and risk perception, low access to dental care and lack of dental insurance are also central to moving the needle in improved oral health for all populations and should be addressed in future interventions. For a copy of the full article related to the community assessment that guided the MOHDAP intervention please go to <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27008993>

Henry Akintobi, T., Hoffman, L., McAllister, C., Goodin, L., Hernandez, N., Rollins, L., & Miller, A. (2016). Assessing the Oral Health Needs of Black Men in Low-Income, Urban Communities, *American Journal of Men's Health*, [Epub ahead of print] PMID:27008993

