



HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER

Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond

FALL 2011

MISSION

A core goal of the HBEC is to encourage older African American adults to consider participating in research projects that have been approved by the HBEC.

In the past, researchers have been hampered by difficulties recruiting older African Americans to be involved in research projects. Research is critical to understanding why African Americans are at much higher risk of developing certain diseases and why these diseases have a greater impact on their health and longevity.

The HBEC has worked to correct this problem by creating a Participant Resource Pool or PRP.

If you agree to be part of the PRP, the Center guarantees that:

All research projects meet the highest quality federal, state and university standards



Your information will be handled with the strictest confidence



You will be considered for research that is of interest to you



You have the right to decline a research project for any reason at any time

Older Detroiters Adjust to New Retirement Realities

“The Lifespan Investigation of Family, Health, and Environment (LIFHE) Project data collection is complete,” according to project director Lisa Ficker, Ph.D. “We have achieved our goal of interviewing 500 African American elders age 55 and older. “We say ‘thank you’ to everyone who participated and to our wonderful team of interviewers.”



LIFHE Interviewers. From top left to right: Patricia Mullin, Lisa Ficker, Patricia Rencher, Deborah Carter. Bottom row, left to right: Shirley Thompson, Erma Allen, Joan Blount, Florence Calhoun.

Dr. Ficker says the survey took a snapshot of information about people’s lives. The goal was to understand senior activities, family relationships, attitudes, health, and challenges at home and in the community. The surveys will be a great resource for many different types of research at the IOG and its collaborator the University of Michigan.

Here are some key findings of the LIFHE study that interviewed 431 women and 70 men:

- Many participants have some experience in college (41%) or are college graduates (29%) and one quarter

said they had a high school diploma (25%). Less than 25% of interviewees are currently married with about equal numbers report being divorced (29%) or widowed (30%) and almost 13% report having never been married. About half of the participants live alone (54%), 19% live with a spouse, and 9% live with an adult child.

- Almost 80% of the elders interviewed have grandchildren and 77% of grandparents live in the same household with a grandchild or great-grandchild. About half of these grandchildren are over age 18.

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HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER (HBEC)

University of Michigan and Wayne State University

Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research: A National Institute on Aging Grant Program

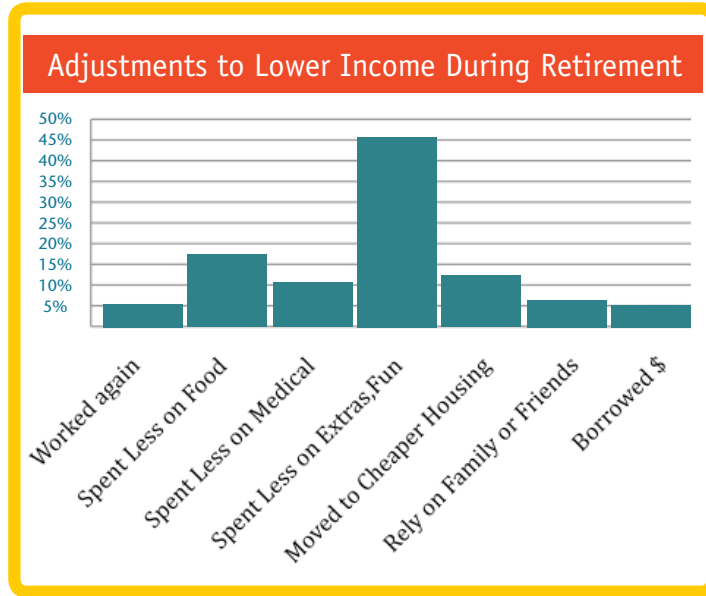


Older Detroiters

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- Multi-generational households are often necessary in the current economic situation, as it is difficult for young people to get established, even after they graduate from high school or college. Indeed, even in retirement, about one third of grandparents provide financial support to grandchildren that they do not live with.

- Many grandparents (42%) reported they had lived with grandchildren in the past and even more participated in childcare for one or more grandchildren. Often grandparents do not consider it 'babysitting' because the grandchildren are merely gathering at the grandparent's house. Nevertheless, they reported that the time spent with their grandchildren allowed their children to work to support the family and/or pursue an education.



- One third of grandparents are providing childcare for their families now and 73% of them reported providing childcare for grandchildren in the past.

Regarding health and mobility, researchers were not surprised to hear about some commonly known challenges:

- About 28% of seniors reported

that they have a disability and 27% use a mobility aid such as a cane or walker. Almost two-thirds report that they experience pain often. About one-quarter of participants had had a fall within the last year but fortunately, only about 10.3% of these elders were injured (often not seriously).

- Over a third of elders reported making changes to their home to improve safety or independence and another 26% of seniors reported that they need such

changes to their home. Guardrails for staircases (or second railings) and grab bars in the bathroom were the most popular equipment mentioned. Many participants were able to drive (77%), but 27% reported that they had limitations to their driving. The most frequent problems were not being able to or not feeling comfortable

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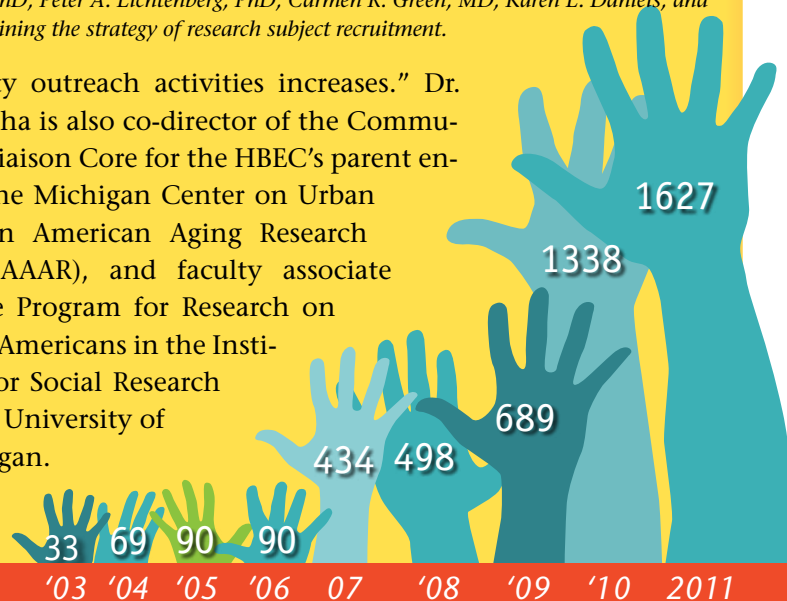
Community Engagement Fuels Research Participation

Building a Registry of Research Volunteers among Older Urban African Americans: Recruitment Processes and Outcomes from a Community-Based Partnership by Letha A. Chadiha, PhD, Olivia G. M. Washington, PhD, Peter A. Lichtenberg, PhD, Carmen R. Green, MD, Karen L. Daniels, and James S. Jackson, PhD., was published in this year's *The Gerontologist* outlining the strategy of research subject recruitment.

African American older adults are under represented in health research. The MCUAAAR is doing something to change that. The MCUAAAR's research participant registry has over 1600 individuals. But it wasn't always this way; it took a lot of effort. In 2004, the MCUAAAR began providing year round educational and health programming.

According to Dr. Letha Chadiha, co-director of the Healthier Black Elders Center "recruiting African American older adults as research subjects increases as researchers' commitment to com-

munity outreach activities increases." Dr. Chadiha is also co-director of the Community Liaison Core for the HBEC's parent entity, the Michigan Center on Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR), and faculty associate in the Program for Research on Black Americans in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan.



Participant Resource Pool (PRP) Growth

Healthy Marital Relationships Protect Health Over Time

PILOT SCHOLAR SPOTLIGHT



Jennifer R. Bulanda, PhD., Sociology

The Healthier Black Elders Center is the community outreach component of the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR). Funded since 1997, MCUAAAR is a joint program between the University of Michigan and Wayne State University. One of the main objectives of the MCUAAAR is to provide mentoring and funding for ethnic minority junior faculty who want to conduct aging and health research. Since 1997 there have been 47 pilot scholars who have completed the program. At right is the project summary from one of this year's pilot scholars.

Although research shows that marital quality is related to health outcomes, very few researchers have considered whether this relationship is similar for African Americans. Using survey data from the Health and Retirement Study, Dr. Jennifer Bulanda examines how satisfaction with one's marriage is related to health outcomes.

The Health and Retirement Study is a national survey of over 20,000 Americans age 50 and over and their spouses, and each individual respondent is interviewed every two years. Respondents are asked a variety of questions about their employment, economics, family, and health. This includes questions specifically about one's marriage to their spouse, such as how supportive their spouse is and how often their spouse criticizes them or lets them down. Respondents also report their overall health and how many health problems

they have been diagnosed with.

Dr. Bulanda examined a group of 368 African Americans aged 50 and over who were married in 2006. Her analysis assessed their health outcomes over a two-year time period based on positive and negative aspects of their marriage. Results show that African Americans who report receiving more positive support from their spouse are healthier two years later. However, negative interactions with one's spouse do not appear to affect short-term health outcomes. Results of Dr. Bulanda's project suggest that having a supportive spouse does not translate into better health because the spouse encourages better health behaviors (e.g., more exercise, less drinking or smoking). Instead, a supportive relationship with one's spouse may protect health over time by buffering the negative effects of other types of stress on health.

HEALTH WATCH



Doctoral candidate Andreea Geamanu, MS, from Wayne State's Nutrition and Food Science department, responds to the following question raised at this year's HBEC June reception

Q. How Healthy or Unhealthy is the Artificial Sweetener Splenda?

A. Sucralose, the main ingredient in Splenda, is a non-nutritive sweetener synthesized from sucrose (table sugar). The body does not metabolize sucralose; therefore, it provides zero calories. Most of the sucralose that is absorbed (approximately 15 % of an oral intake) is excreted unchanged and it does not accumulate in the body.

Sucralose is 600 times sweeter than sugar, and it can replace or be combined with sugar in cooking and baking to reduce the total calories and carbohydrates. Products containing sucralose are often lower-calorie products and can help people lose weight by reducing calorie intake from sugar. Because sucralose has no effect on blood glucose or insulin levels, it is a preferred option for people with

diabetes, who must monitor their carbohydrate intake.

Sucralose has been studied extensively over the last 20 years and more than 110 studies concluded that there are no harmful effects from consuming sucralose, and it is safe for its intended use by public health authorities worldwide, including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The amounts found safe were, for an average-weight adult, equivalent in sweetness to more than 40 lbs. of sugar per day over the lifetime, meaning that people can consume a variety of foods and beverages sweetened with sucralose on a daily basis without concern. Sucralose was found safe to be used by pregnant women and children, and it does not cause dental cavities or tooth decay.

Both sucralose and the retail product Splenda No Calorie Sweetener are safe and may be a useful adjunct to the diet in meal plans designed to reduce unwanted calories or carbohydrates from nutritive sweeteners.

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driving at night, fatigue, cost of gas or car repairs, and disliking freeways.

The study also revealed that many older adults of this generation of seniors are very comfortable where they live with 54% feeling that they will always live in their current setting. At the present time, about two-thirds of the participants live in a single-family home with 20% living in an apartment or condo and an additional 10% living in a senior residence or apartment. Almost one-third of elders have a plan for the future in case they need help and 90% had discussed this plan with someone they can count on: a family member, friend or confidant. About 5% of seniors did not know who they would turn to if they needed help and could not live independently anymore.

Most of the participants (90%) considered themselves retired and most people (70%) reported that their income was lower than it had been before they retired. Almost 50% of seniors report that they are somewhat satisfied with their income. And 28% are not at all satisfied.

Most participants agreed they had to adjust their expectations about what they can and can not afford during retirement and this is not always an easy process.

Dr. Ficker is especially grateful for the wonderful response she received from the members of the HBEC Participant Resource Pool. "Without these folks being willing to share their time, lives, and opinions with us, this project would not be possible," she adds.



Save the Date

Loving Yourself From Death

Wednesday, February 29, 2012 Noon -1:30 pm
Gabrielle Senior Apartments, Community Room
14201 Second Ave. Highland Park MI 48203
To RSVP, call (313)664-2604

Senior Wealth: Wellness and Safety

Wednesday, March 14, 2012 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
Chene Park Commons, Community Room
2001 Chene Detroit, MI 48207
To RSVP, call Ms. Dotson at (313)567-7275
Apartment tours will follow

Understanding Dementia Behaviors

Wednesday, April 11, 2012 10:30am-12:30pm
Ellis Manor Apartments of
Greater Grace Temple, Community Room
19200 Shiawasse Dr. Detroit, MI 48219
To RSVP, call Ms. Lisa Rodgers at (313)592-4991

Good Aging Requires Good Planning

Tuesday, May 15, 2012, 10:00am – 12:00pm
Catholic Social Services of Wayne County
9851 Hamilton, Detroit, MI 48206
To RSVP, call Ms. Barbara Keys at (313)883-8323

All forums are free, but an rsvp is required.