



# HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER

FALL 2014

## Mission

*The HBEC encourages older African Americans to consider participating in approved 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. If you agree to be part of the PRP, we guarantee 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.



Nearly 300 elders learn about diabetes care at our 2014 event. photo by Catherine Blasio

## What's Your Number?

Health care often centers on numbers. Blood pressure, cholesterol and weight all need to fall within a healthy range. Blood glucose numbers matter, too, but the most frightening number in diabetes at the moment is the percentage of older adults in the U.S. who have it: a staggering 25% and growing. Among African Americans and Hispanics, the percentage is even higher.

Unlike some chronic diseases, though, diabetes is treatable. So here's a happier number: 100% of people with diabetes can help control their disease through medication, careful monitoring and lifestyle changes.

The Healthier Black Elders Center

(HBEC) tries to reverse the health disparities afflicting older African Americans, like the higher rates of diabetes. So the Center's 2014 signature event focused on educating nearly 300 older adults on the symptoms, self-care and prevention of this epidemic of diabetes in older adults. "You asked for this information on last year's evaluation form, and we made it happen," Carmen R. Green, M.D. and HBEC director, told the June 10 audience. "We're partners to keep you healthy."

Physician Stephenie Lucas, an endocrinologist and expert in diabetes care, kicked off the day. She explained that Type I diabetics produce no insulin, but Type

SEE DIABETES ON BACK PAGE



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

WAYNE STATE  
UNIVERSITY

## Wonder what kinds of things the volunteers in our Participant Resource Pool get asked to do?

Here's a brief description of just two of the dozens of research projects that have relied on participation from our dedicated group of volunteers.

### Financial Decision Making

To help prevent the financial exploitation of older adults, we must understand how older adults make major financial decisions and create tools that insure their decisions reflect comprehension of the issues surrounding the transaction. Financial decision-making assessment can be a way for financial and health professionals to insure that the decisions being made are authentic and not the result of psychological vulnerability, undue influence or cognitive impairment.

To try to prevent the financial exploitation of elders, Dr. Peter Lichtenberg has developed a set of scales to assess older adults' financial decision-making abilities, including the *Lichtenberg Financial Decision Rating Scale*. To validate this scale, Dr. Lichtenberg is partnering with the Healthier Black Elders Center and the PRP. Volunteers in his study take part in a two-hour interview that includes questions about their financial decisions and an assessment of their thinking and financial skills. Participants are paid \$40.

"The goal is to understand how older adults make financial decisions

in terms of thinking and emotions," said Dr. Lichtenberg. "We are looking at psychological vulnerabilities, such as loneliness, depression and stress." These differ from cognitive vulnerabilities, which are also often very subtle and will be measured extensively. "The database of about 1,200 members of the Participant Resource Pool has been a cornerstone of our recruitment," Dr. Lichtenberg said. "The stories about their financial situations are the key to the success of our project as we try to develop ways to prevent exploitation in the future."

### U-M Memory and Aging Project

Large numbers of volunteers are needed for this study, and the Participant Resource Pool is helping to supply them. Researchers in the University of Michigan's Memory and Aging Project (part of the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center) are studying older adults with and without memory changes to learn more about normal aging and Alzheimer's disease. The study requires annual visits and testing over time to chart brain changes.

They hope to recruit 100 people a year over five years, many of them

under-represented minorities such as African Americans. That's where our PRP is helping. Starting in 2013, the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center made the recruitment of under-represented minorities into research a priority. Thanks in part to their collaboration with the HBEC in Detroit, they are reaching their goal. The U-M Center's research registry currently has 284 persons, 49% of them are African American and 15% were recruited from PRP or HBEC events.

The Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Center also offers specialized educational outreach to minority elders on brain health, wellness activities, and the importance of participating in research and clinical trials. Dr. Edna Rose, MADC Minority Recruitment Specialist, and Kristin Cahill, MADC Education Coordinator, guided the development of an MADC Speakers' Bureau and a memory screening program available at HBEC events and other Detroit programs throughout the year.

Over the past year, at HBEC events alone, U-M researchers have conducted free memory screenings on nearly 300 elders. These screenings detect early changes that should be followed up with a physician, and also provide an introduction and invitation to consider volunteering for the U-M Memory and Aging Project.



U-M researchers recruit volunteers at HBEC event. photo by Catherine Blasio

# FREE Learning Events in Our Community to Improve Your Health and Well-being

The Healthier Black Elders Center has revamped its educational programs to make them even more interesting, relevant and fun for attendees. Each program is taught by experts, held at a safe and convenient location, and provides take-home materials as well as a free and nutritious snack or lunch.

This year, we're partnering with another Wayne State group called CURES to teach Detroit residents how to keep their environment healthy. CURES stands for the Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors. Part of its mission is to alert people of all ages to potential hazards around them, like air and water pollution, workplace chemi-

## Environmental Health Chat



### Everyday Toxics & Our Health

**Wednesday, Nov. 19, 9:30 - Noon**

Focus HOPE, 1400 Oakman Blvd., Detroit, MI 48238

FREE health screenings and morning snack

The event is FREE but you must register to attend.

RSVP by Nov. 14 to [carrieleach@wayne.edu](mailto:carrieleach@wayne.edu) or 313-664-2616.

**All Ages Welcome**

icals, food ingredients and other toxic substances that could damage their health.

Be a part of our first CURES health chat, "Everyday Toxics & Our Health." The event, breakfast, and

health screenings are free. All ages are encouraged to attend, so please bring family and friends. Open discussion of these issues follows the presentations.

More than 1,000 older African Americans from the Detroit area have joined our group of volunteers interested in helping with research.

Won't you become one of them?

Our HBEC Lunch & Learn sessions emphasize the importance of scientific research to help keep older African Americans healthy. This group is at high risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and certain cancers. Research into these problems can help us lower these rates. Consider volunteering for one of the many research projects presented at our Lunch & Learn sessions by joining the Participant Resource Pool, or PRP. You can sign-up at the event, or call 313-664-2604 to learn more.



**HBEC**



### Don't Get Stiffed by Arthritis Pain

**Thursday, Dec. 11, 9:30 - Noon** Free Valet Parking

Regency Heights, 19100 W. Seven Mile Rd., Detroit, MI 48219

Don't get stiffed by arthritis pain. Medications, exercise, diet, stress reduction and holistic techniques to control your pain and keep you moving.

RSVP required to 313-664-2605 by Dec. 8. Simply leave your details on the voicemail.



**Need a ride to either event?** Detroit Area Agency on Aging offers Curb-to-Curb service, if you are 60 or over. \$2.50 each way. Call 313-446-4444 ext 5370.

## HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER

### Diabetes from page 1

“If diabetics produce *some* insulin, making insulin levels fluctuate and requiring close monitoring. The impact of uncontrolled diabetes can be widespread, she added, from vision changes to kidney damage to poor circulation in the feet and legs. “You need foot protection all the time,” Dr. Lucas said. “No flip-flops, since wounds to the feet can lead to dangerous infections. And watch out for Belly Jelly. Folks with lots of fat around the middle are at higher risk for diabetes.”

A panel of experts in eye health, nutrition and diabetes resources gave the audience tips on preventing diabetes damage. Suggestions included avoiding empty calories, exercising 30 minutes a day, monitoring blood glucose, and losing excess weight.

Health care consultant Sharon Williams explained how the Affordable Care Act can affect Medicare and Medicaid coverage and the value of advantage insurance plans. The popular session prompted questions about the continued need for coverage for long-term care and dental health.



“ Watch out for Belly Jelly.”  
– Dr. Lucas

The event included a diabetes friendly hot lunch, Tai Chi exercise, and free health screenings tailored to diabetes care. More than 200 screenings were completed, including vision, hearing, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and memory. Twenty-nine new volunteers were also recruited into the PRP, the special pool of older African Americans willing to be considered for research to help eliminate health disparities between African Americans and other ethnic and racial groups.