

transitions

INSTITUTE OF GERONTOLOGY

Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond

Fall 2009

IOG Faculty Awarded \$1.2 M Grant to Analyze Depression in U.S.

Dr. Hector González has received a three-year, \$1.2 million grant to determine the prevalence and distribution of major depression among older adults from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. Dr. González is an assistant professor of gerontology, family medicine and public health sciences at the IOG and an expert on minority health and aging. His ELLDERS project – Epidemiology of Late-Life Depression and Ethnicity Research Study – will update and revise estimates that are 30 years old.

Dr. González' project will identify older Cubans, Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, Filipinos, Vietnamese, Chinese and non-Hispanic Whites, review their rates and sub-types of major depression and determine any treatment given. Reviewers of Dr. González' grant application to the National Institute of Mental Health, wrote that this project would have "major public health significance."

Much has changed in 30 years. One oversight in the old study's breakdown of ethnic groups, was the complete absence of Latinos. The US Census questionnaire from

the 1940s to 70s had no Latino category, though today's Latino population is approximately 15%. "Latinos were definitely living here then, but they weren't counted as Latinos," Dr. González said. "So the old data couldn't separate out their rates of depression or treatment."

A recent paper by Dr. González in the *Archives of Psychiatry* showed the folly of making conclusions about depression without an accurate division of ethnic groups. "Previous researchers said Latinos

and Whites receive similarly high rates of treatment for depression," Dr. González said. "But when we sub-divide Latinos to identify Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans, we learn that Puerto Ricans have *higher* rates of treatment than Whites, while Mexican Americans have significantly *lower* rates of treatment, similar to African Americans."

The study should result in a paradigm shift among physicians and mental health professions in anticipating the frequency and treatment of depression in specific ethnic groups. "Clinicians think in terms



"Clinicians think in terms of base rates for disease, which are now old rates that don't accurately portray today's population."

- Dr. González

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Vice President for Research Dr. Hilary Ratner joined Dr. Lichtenberg to announce the creation of the Lifespan Alliance (L.A.), a partnership between the IOG and the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute to conduct research that studies several points across the lifeline. Under the direction of Dr. Lichtenberg, L.A.'s first project is the Lifespan Investigation of Family, Health and Environment (LIFHE) to study grandparents raising grandchildren. L.A. recently hosted a joint poster session displaying the research of 25 IOG and MPSI students.

research
education
outreach
partnerships



No Elder Left Behind

The Legacy of Olivia Washington



Olivia Washington, a lifelong champion of improved health for vulnerable urban African Americans, has announced she will retire from Wayne State University on December 31. “Olivia has achieved extraordinary success during her 29 plus years at Wayne,” Dr. Lichtenberg said. She has published nearly 40 articles and book chapters, received 15 awards of significance including the Great Seal of Michigan, the Women of Wayne Outstanding Achievement award, the very competitive Career Development Chair Award, and the Pillar Award of Excellence, as well as completed several major research projects. “We are extremely sad to lose her,” Dr. Lichtenberg said, “but we must accept her decision to enter this new phase of her life.”



“Because the days of our lives are numbered, to really count they need to be of value to others besides ourselves. And although such visible caring for and about others does not require perfection, it does require genuinely embracing opportunities and the privilege of expanding our humanity in service to those who are most in need of it.”

– Olivia G. M. Washington, November 2009

Dr. Washington’s involvement in the work of the Healthier Black Elders Center (HBEC), and the College of Nursing has been deep, broad and meaningful. Her early research interests as a faculty member of the College of Nursing focused on chemical dependency and homelessness among women, and later encompassed issues associated with the high rates of hypertension among African Americans. Dr. Washington’s credentials make her uniquely qualified to provide health education and conduct health research. She has two degrees in nursing: a Bachelor and Master of Science and a Doctorate of Philosophy in Counselor Education with a focus in mental health counseling. She also is a Nurse Practitioner, a board certified Clinical Nurse Specialist in Adult Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing, and a Licensed Professional Counselor.

Dr. Washington’s decision to join the IOG as an assistant professor in 2000 (she is now an associate professor), reflects the natural progression of her work to include African American elders, especially those at high risk of certain chronic and potentially disabling diseases. “Decades of mistrust in traditional medicine had taken their toll,” she said of



Over her career, Dr. Washington has spread the message of healthy aging to 1000’s through teaching, writing and HBEC events.

her work as director of the HBEC whose mission is to educate elders to overcome their fears and to seek preventative healthcare through community outreach, education, and research. The HBEC is part of the outreach component of the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research, a shared collaboration between the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research (Director James S. Jackson) and the Wayne State University IOG (Director Peter Lichtenberg). Dr. Washington also co-directs this Center’s Community Liaison Core.

The HBEC organizes five to six community Healthcare Consumer Learning Series each year and a large annual event in June that attracted 1,100 participants and performed a record 930 free health screenings. The HBEC Health Reception combines motivational health presentations, health screen-

ings, music, dance, exercise and good nutrition to encourage elders to take ownership of their health. “By providing health screenings and information, music and foods our elders enjoy, in a venue that has meaning for them, we send a potent message,” said Dr. Washington. “We care enough to partner with you to enhance your health and your future.”

Research surveys from the 2009 event showed that 85.6% of attendees improved their understanding of research and 72.3% plan to improve their health habits as a result of attending the reception. A majority of attendees said the Health Reception inspired them to eat better, exercise more and pay more attention to their health conditions. “Our efforts are having a profound impact on urban health,” Dr. Washington said. “Consistency and quality year-

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IOG MILESTONES

Winners of the IOG's Fall Research Poster competition for trainees were: First Place to **Stacey Schepens, Ph.D.** for "The Effectiveness of Tailoring Falls Prevention Education for Older Adult Learners." Second Place to **Emily Briceno** for "Effects of Path Characteristics and Cognitive Resources on Age-related Differences in Visual Path Integration." Third Place to **Kirk Rodgers** for "Effects of Age and Navigation Strategy Preference on Virtual Morris Water Maze Performance." IOG trainees submitted 12 posters that were thoroughly critiqued by a team of three faculty judges.

Dr. Thomas Jankowski received the 2009 *McNamara Award* from the *Senior Alliance* for his pursuit of excellence in aging services.

Mary Byrnes (pre-doc 06) successfully defended her dissertation, *Older Adults' Meanings of Home, Past and Present*, this summer. She accepted a tenure-track position in sociology at Western Carolina University.

Brooke Schneider (pre-doc 09) won third place in the Blue Cross Blue Shield Foundation's Excellence in Research competition for her paper, "Executive Ability and Physical Performance in Urban Black Older Adults," in the *Archives of Clinical Neuropsychology*.

Stacey Schepens (pre-doc 09) won the Everett J. Soop Award from the Michigan Society of Gerontology as the distinguished Michigan student who demonstrated outstanding performance in studies and an interest in the field of aging. She was also chosen to present her research to legislators and other universities at Graduate Education in Michigan week in Lansing. Stacey completes her doctorate this fall and will begin a post-doctoral position at the University of Michigan in November.



Dr. Jankowski on right

Faculty Fellow Uses Celebrities to Test How Memories Are Made and Stored

The IOG's new faculty fellow counts on Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, Jennifer Aniston and John Fitzgerald Kennedy to help him measure memory in older adults. Dr. John Woodard is an associate professor in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences, specializing in clinical psychology. He is an excellent fit as the IOG's 2009/10 faculty fellow because of his long-standing research interests in memory and aging. The famous names he can drop is an added bonus.

"We needed to find a way to measure memories acquired at different points along the lifespan," Dr. Woodard explained. "The prevailing theory was that the brain's hippocampus (a crucial component of memory and spatial navigation) was activated only to consign new information into long-term memory. We didn't think we needed it to pull up old memories. So our test had to clearly differentiate an old memory from a new one."

Monica Lewinsky to the rescue. Dr. Woodard and his team decided that a complex array of famous names from different eras intermixed with common names from the phone book would serve as a good activation tool for memory. With their brains under surveillance by a Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging machine, subjects were asked if they recognized a series of names keyed to specific time periods.

The results surprised them. First, the accuracy and reaction time of subjects was better when they pulled up an older memory. Second, regardless of whether the subject was recognizing Jack Benny or George Bush, the hippocampus was active. It lit up in the retrieval of an older memory and the encoding of a newer memory. "We seem to need the hip-

Depression Grant CONTINUED

of base rates for disease," Dr. González said. "For example, the old data indicated that Asians rarely present with depression. Our new data may yield a different conclusion."

Dr. González' career research agenda was inspired by one question: "Globally, what is the most



Dr. Woodard analyzes brain imaging with graduate psychology students.

pocampus for everything," Dr. Woodard said. "And it is unfortunately the first area in the brain to show changes from Alzheimer's and other dementias. This has implications for diagnosis and treatment."

Dr. Woodard has also worked extensively with the Georgia Centenarian Study in which a large team of researchers is analyzing 244 persons age 98 or older to determine why they are living longer. Thirty percent of participants have agreed to a post-mortem donation of their brains for further study. The information gleaned from these behavioral and physiological profiles could change the course of aging research.

The IOG's faculty fellowship buys a mini-sabbatical for Dr. Woodard by funding a one-year release from teaching so he can concentrate on grants, research and publications. "I'm looking forward to increased involvement with IOG faculty," he said. "Their interests are my interests: older adults, cognitive abilities, retaining memory and function. Our intellectual passions are in sync."

disabling disorder?" Depression ranks first or second throughout the world, affecting productivity, relationships, longevity, dementia rates and general health. "By investigating depression, especially in late-life," he said, "My work has the potential to be particularly significant to public health."

Outreach



Energize Your Creative Side at Art of Aging

Mark your calendar and awaken your creativity in time for the March 25th Art of Aging Successfully Conference "Engaged, Enlightened, Energized" at Greater Grace Conference Center (23500 W. 7 Mile Rd). Our keynote speaker for the event will be Mr. Bill Bonds, former news anchorman and now an advocate for successful aging. Choose any two of six interactive workshops: Powersit, Zumba, Genealogy, Aging Through Music, Don't Be Scammed, and Legacy Writing. Cost is \$18, which includes a continental breakfast and a hot lunch. Registration begins January 1. Art of Aging always sells out, so don't delay.

We also encourage you to contribute your artistic talents to our Creative Expressions display. We accept applications for all forms of artwork, such as painting, quilting, writing, wood sculpture, poetry, glass blowing, photography, ceramics, and more. Deadline to enter your creative submission is January 1.

For more information on the conference, please contact the IOG's Director of Community Outreach Donna MacDonald, at 313-577-2297. Applications for Creative Expressions and registration forms for the conference are also available on our website at www.iog.wayne.edu. See you there . . .

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT



Former IOG Trainee Links Masculinity To African American Health Risks

Dr. Waverly Duck, a post doctoral associate at Yale University's department of sociology, has found that African American males may be avoiding medical treatments because they are seen as a threat to their masculinity. Dr. Duck, an IOG pre-doctoral trainee from 1999 to 2004, studied how African American men define their masculinity relative to their health behaviors. His research showed that seeing a physician, and having health screenings and tests (especially for HIV/AIDS) is seen as inhibiting sexual freedom and thus decreasing masculinity. These same men will, however, pursue health screenings for diseases they deem curable, if the cure allows them to resume normal sexual relations.

"If men avoid going to the doctor as a way of exhibiting masculinity, then new strategies of health intervention should be promoted to this population," Dr. Duck said. He suggests offering voluntary testing in hospital emergency rooms for conditions such as prostate cancer, heart disease and HIV/AIDS, because this may be the only contact many African American men have with medical staff. His paper "Black Male Sexual Politics: Avoidance of HIV/AIDS Testing as a Masculine Health Practice," was published in the *Journal of African American Studies* earlier this year and widely cited in the media.

Dr. Duck describes his years at the IOG as an excellent launching pad for his current achievements. He is especially grateful to his faculty advisor Dr. Lichtenberg, "for being an excellent mentor even four years after my departure from the IOG," he wrote. Dr. Lichtenberg is "truly a great scholar and one of the best advisors I've ever had." Dr. Duck is also the associate director of the Yale Urban Ethnography Project. Ethnography is a branch of anthropology that researches human societies by studying persons in the context of their cultural environments.

No Elder Left Behind CONT.

after-year make a measurable difference."

In line with this health mission is the need for continued research on the health disparities affecting African Americans. Research projects depend on participation. Dr. Washington helped to establish one of the country's first databases of older African Americans willing to participate in health research. The Participant Resource Pool now totals 1,137 participants. Research projects using participants from this pool may help find solutions to the health problems disproportionately affecting African Americans.

In addition to health disparities, older African American women are at increased risk of homelessness, especially as the economic underpinnings of Detroit deteriorate. Dr. Washington lead a 1999-2000 project to identify the characteristics of older homeless African American women, which produced several follow-up projects to help homeless women become re-domiciled through group therapy and support. The research also has included a number of unique and creative projects (two-dimensional photo collages in a public art installation, quilting workshops, memoirs, narrative interviewing, poetry and storytelling) to chronicle the first-person accounts of eight older African American women as they entered and emerged from homelessness. *Telling My Story: At the Edge of Recovery* received widespread attention and is now accessible through the soon-to-be-launched *Telling My Story* website at www.lhipr.wayne.edu.

Education

Partnership

Giving Trees at American House Spread Holiday Hope for Seniors

It's as easy as lifting an ornament off a Christmas tree. With your help, the new Holiday Hope for Seniors program, created by the American House Foundation, will make the simple dreams of 200 desperate older adults come true. Just walk into any American House Senior Living Residence

in the metro Detroit area, choose an ornament off their Giving Tree, register your choice with the staff, and fulfill your senior's wish.

Each ornament lists the name of an older adult in need, the item they would like to have, and the cost of that item. You contribute the money; volunteers buy, wrap and deliver the gifts. The ornaments benefit area seniors identified by Lighthouse of Oakland County and Detroit's N.O.A.H. Project (Networking, Organizing and Advocating for the Homeless). "The need is great now," said Lighthouse Senior Services Care Coordinator Debbie Mayer. "These are seniors whose fondest wish might be for a warm pair of socks or a blanket to tuck around their lap." Although the Giving Trees are displayed in American House Residences, the donations are not for its residents.

"These gifts are for older adults who aren't lucky enough to live in an American House facility," said IOG Development Officer Terri Bailey who helped to create the program. In addition to the Giving Trees, American House Foundation will fund a luncheon and a food giveaway in Detroit in December. Selected seniors will receive re-usable grocery bags filled with food and personal care items donated from Kroger's Birmingham store and through a generous gift from Health Alliance Plan (HAP). The Holiday Hope program "spans the Woodward corridor from Pontiac to Detroit," Terri said. "Wherever seniors live, we find seniors in need."

Rob Gillette, chief operating officer of American House Residences, said the Holiday Hope program aligns perfectly with the mission of the American

"These are seniors whose fondest wish might be for a warm pair of socks or a blanket to tuck around their lap."



- Debbie Mayer
Lighthouse Senior Services Care Coordinator

House Foundation. "We wanted to create a charity that does something immediate and hands-on for individuals, while also supporting longer-term research into aging," he said. "My vision was of a charity where small amounts of money could have a big impact."

Since 2007, American House Foundation has raised over \$175,000, donated close to \$50,000 to

the IOG for research on aging—including the Seniors Count! project – and made approximately 600 individual donations totaling more than \$100,000 for dental, healthcare and medical equipment needs not covered by insurance, as well as critical home maintenance and renovations.

To find a Giving Tree location near you, please visit the American House Senior Living Residence website at: www.americanhouse.com. For further details or to make a direct donation, please contact Terri Bailey at 313-875-9048 or tbailey@wayne.edu. To learn more about the good works of Lighthouse of Oakland County, as they move people from crisis to self-sufficiency, visit: www.lighthouseoakland.org

PARTNERSHIP CORNER

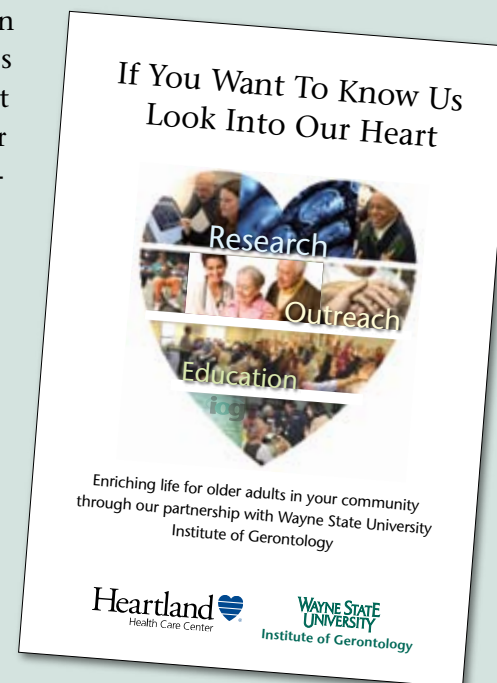
Heartland's Heart of Gold Helps IOG

"If You Want To Know Us, Look Into Our Heart." This message will be displayed in every Heartland Rehabilitation Center in Southeastern Michigan. It represents Heartland's support of the IOG and their partnership in promoting successful aging through research, education and outreach. As a Platinum Level sponsor, Heartland will include information about the IOG in every admissions and discharge packet giving Heartland pa-

tients and their families the opportunity to participate in and support the efforts of the IOG.

By affiliating with the IOG in this way,

Heartland will translate our shared mission to thousands of older adults and their families, people who might not otherwise know about our work, but who could benefit from the knowledge we bring to the community. Heartland's commitment to healthy aging is evident in this affiliation and we, at the IOG, appreciate the opportunity to partner with them in this creative and expansive way.



SAVE THE DATE!

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (Free unless otherwise noted)

THURSDAY, NOV. 12 (NOON – 1:30 PM)

Healthcare Reform Affecting the Older Adult: Is there really a Death Panel?

Northwest Activities Center

18100 Meyers Road (N of W. McNichols), Detroit, 48235

Lunch is served

DECEMBER (Check the IOG website for date and time)

Especially for Latino Americans: Health Equality (with Dr. Hector González')

7150 W. Vernor Hwy, Detroit, MI 48209

For more information, contact Community Outreach Specialist Loretta Akers at 313-577-2297, ext. 252

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 2 (10-11 AM)

The Aging Brain: Form and Function

Windows on the World of Aging Series

LongAcre House, 24705 Farmington Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48336

Pre-registration recommended by calling 248-473-1800

FRIDAY, JAN. 1, 2010

Deadline for creative submissions for the March 25 Art of Aging Successfully conference. Art of Aging displays non-professional writings, music and art works in all mediums from persons 55 years and older. Call Donna at 313-577-2297 or visit www.iog.wayne.edu for an application.

FEBRUARY 2010 (Check the IOG website for date and time)

Pump It Up! Heart Health Issues in the Aging Black Community

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 16100 Lawton, Detroit, MI 48221

THURSDAY, FEB. 4 (9 AM –NOON)

Judy Walberg Conference on Aging

WSU Oakland Campus, 33737 West 12 Mile Road, Farmington Hills

This professional CE conference, co-hosted by the IOG and the Area Agency on Aging 1-B, offers Continuing Education Credits in nursing, social work, and nursing home administration. Dr. Neil Alexander from the University of Michigan will discuss fall risk assessment and reduction. Oakwood Health System Geriatrician David Sengstock will speak on the geriatrician's role today.

THURSDAY, MAR. 25 (9 AM – 2 PM)

Art of Aging Successfully Conference, Engaged Enlightened, Energized

Greater Grace Conference Center, 23500 W. 7 Mile Rd., Detroit, 48219

Fee of \$18 includes lunch, keynote speaker Bill Bonds, and choice of two interactive workshops. (See article on p. 4)

TUESDAY, JUNE 1 (9 AM – 2:30 PM)

Healthier Black Elders Health Reception

Bert's Warehouse Theater, Historic Eastern Market, Detroit

Pre-Registration required.

Editor/Writer - **CHERYL DEEP** • Graphic Designer - **CATHERINE BLASIO** • Photographer - **RICK BIELACZYK**

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