



The HBEC encourages older African Americans to participate in approved research.

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 Participant Resource Pool (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.

If interested contact LaToya Hall at: 313-664-2604



### 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

# HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER

Promoting Successful Aging in Detroit and Beyond

SPRING 2016

## WSU Team Studies Daily Activities and Neighborhood Stress

A Wayne State University research team used the Participant Resource Pool (PRP) to examine the relationship between daily activities, neighborhood environmental stressors and stress responses. The Daily Activities, Neighborhood Environmental Stressors and Stress Response (DANSS) study was funded by the WSU Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors (CURES).

One hundred PRP members were selected to participate in the full study, then 20 persons were randomly selected from this group to take part in an extra study component. They were given smart phones and asked to take photographs of their neighborhood while they were out doing everyday activities. Photographs could be of anything in their neighborhood that they felt important to their daily activities or stress. After collecting the photographs from participants, one-on-one interviews were conducted to evaluate what the pictures meant to each photographer. The information collected in the full/larger



study is still being analyzed, but the research team has provided some preliminary results for the extra/smaller study of 20 participants.

Participants submitted 720 photos that were then uploaded to an iPad or laptop to view during the one-on-one interviews. Analysis of the photos found an overarching theme of older adults in the Detroit area feeling a loss of trustworthiness in their surroundings. This loss arose from four areas of concern:

1. **Environmental concerns**, such as dilapidated housing, un-

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## Fall 2015 Lunch & Learn Follow-up

The Fall Lunch & Learn Series was a hit, thanks to all who came out to support the HBEC and pick-up some valuable information on aging. More

than 500 HBEC and community elders attended the events. Our nurses measured more than 225 blood

SEE FALL FOLLOW\_UP BACK PAGE

HBEC Seniors get questions about Arthritis answered **see inside**

## Stress from page 1

maintained lots, and the visual appeal of neighborhoods;

2. **Social concerns**, such as the changes in the ages of neighbors, renters versus home owners, lack of property maintenance, noise and disturbance and deteriorating social networks;

3. **Institutional concerns**, these encompass city services, poor police responses, and large amounts of foreclosed properties not being maintained by banks; and

4. **Knowledge concerns**, which cover the perception and impression of their communities due to information from the media and other outlets.

The data also demonstrated how residents responded to the loss of trustworthiness in their neighborhood environment. Researchers found that residents changed their daily activities, while some experienced negative emotions. Other residents, however, showed resilience and resistance in response to their chal-

lenging neighborhood conditions. One example of this is when a resident said, "My husband, he plants flowers and picks up the paper and whatever. He says that this will keep people away from it, so he does it to protect us as well."

"As an occupational therapist, the findings that interest me most are the connection between everyday activity and health and well-being," said research team co-investigator Dr. Heather Fritz. Dr. Fritz says she found it both interesting and encouraging that the causes of the loss of trustworthiness in the communities are actionable at a policy level. The DANSS research team hopes this pilot study will attract funding for a larger study that could have even more impact on policies to improve the neighborhood environments where older adults live.

The team thanks the 100 PRP members, 55 and older, living across a wide range of neighborhoods in the city of Detroit, who participated in the study.

## You provide the audience and we will bring the lunch and information

Stress is everywhere. Learn what to do about it. Our friends at the WSU, Center for Urban Responses to Environmental Stressors (CURES) offer **FREE** mobile educational sessions. They will come to your location and present to your small group.

### TOPICS INCLUDE:

- *Eating For Good Health*
- *Environmental Effects on Allergies and Asthma*



If interested, call Brian Smith at 313-577-5045 or email [brian.smith9@wayne.edu](mailto:brian.smith9@wayne.edu).

## 2015 Lunch & Learn Follow-up

### Common Arthritis Questions & Answers

Dr. Russell York is a rheumatologist who was the keynote speaker at our October Lunch & Learn, *Aches and Pains: Is It My Age or Something Else?* The session was very well attended, with 236 members coming out to receive valuable information on arthritis care and pain management. We couldn't get to all the questions at the Lunch & Learn, so Dr. York answers some of the key remaining questions below:

#### What foods should I avoid if I have arthritis?

When you have arthritis, your body is in an inflammatory state.

What you eat may not only increase inflammation it can also set you up for other chronic diseases such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Cutting back on foods

that promote inflammation, increasing the proportion of fruits and vegetables in your diet, making fish your main protein and getting more omega-3s can make a big difference in your arthritis symptoms. Want to know what to include in an arthritis-friendly diet? Visit [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org) and be sure to discuss any concerns you have with your doctor or health professional. Here are a few inflammation triggers in foods you may be eating.

**1. Sugar** – it may be hard to resist desserts, pastries, chocolate bars, sodas, even fruit juices. However, the American Journal of

# Join Us for Financial Health after 60

The HBEC has received a \$15,000 grant from the Mary Thompson Foundation to roll out Financial Health after 60. Financial Health after 60 is a financial capabilities curriculum designed to cater to the unique needs of urban elders nearing or in retirement in regards to finances. Financial Health after 60 is a four-workshop series. Each workshop is designed to address a specific area of finance applicable to urban elders. The workshops were designed to be interactive and will take place at various locations throughout Detroit city. The four workshops include:



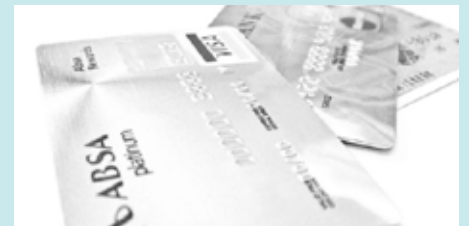
**Avoiding Financial Exploitation** informs participants of possible financial scams and frauds targeting older adults. This workshop contains information on common financial scams, the possible perpetrators of these scams, the warning signs of financial exploitation, and the protections seniors should put in place to avoid being exploited. It also contains scenarios in which older

adults will detect warning signs and threats and work through which protections would help them avoid victimization.



**Household Finance** educates older adults on gaining full control of their household financial situation. Older adults will be engaged in discussions of financial goal setting, calculating

net worth, household budgeting and creating retirement spending plans. This workshop also includes exercises and worksheets to assist older adults in better understanding household finance topics.



**All about Credit** provides participants with accurate, up-to-date information about credit. All about credit will provide the

Clinical Nutrition warns that processed sugars trigger the release of inflammatory messengers called cytokines. Sugar goes by many names so look out for any word ending in "ose," e.g. fructose or sucrose on ingredient labels.

**2. Refined carbohydrates** - white flour products (breads, rolls, crackers) white rice, white potatoes (instant mashed potatoes, or french fries) and many cereals are refined carbohydrates. According to Scientific American, processed carbohydrates may trump fats as the main driver of escalating rates of obesity and other chronic conditions. These high-glycemic index foods

fuel the production of advanced glycation end (AGE) products that stimulate inflammation.

**3. Alcohol** - alcohol is a burden to the liver. Excessive use weakens liver function and disrupts other multi-organ interactions and can cause inflammation. It is best eliminated or used in moderation.

## Does weather really affect my arthritis, back, neck and hips?

People with arthritis often claim they can predict the weather, based on their joint pain level, and with good reason. Studies show

a variety of weather factors can increase pain, especially changes. Watch for any changes in:

- Barometric pressure (especially falling)
- Temperature (especially lowering)

A study from Tufts University in 2007 found that every 10-degree drop in temperature corresponded with an incremental increase in arthritis pain. In addition, relatively low barometric pressure, low temperatures and precipitation can increase pain. Researchers aren't sure why this happens. They suspect certain atmospheric condi-



framework older adults can use to navigate credit usage before and during retirement. This workshop includes information on the credit score formula, tips on maximizing your credit score, the real impacts of the credit score on interest rates, and information on the different types of credit available.



**Retirement: Planning and the Spend Down** facilitates discussion around retirement. The three-legged stool retirement model is used to demonstrate the three major income streams (social security, employer sponsored programs, and savings and investments) older adults will draw from during retirement. Older adults will be informed on the best practices for maximiz-

tions increase swelling in the joint capsule. To predict your joint pain level based on the local weather visit [www.arthritis.org](http://www.arthritis.org).

### Is trigger finger a form of arthritis and can it be cured?

Our hands are one of our greatest tools. Their multiple small joints work together with muscles to produce precise motions and strength. They allow us to button a shirt, open a jar, wave to a neighbor, stroke a pet's fur or provide a comforting touch. But hands also can be prone to arthritis and related problems

**The Healthier Black Elder's Center will offer the program this spring at the dates and times listed below. Please contact LaToya Hall at 313-664-2604 to register.**

**St. Patrick's Center**, 58 Parsons Street, Detroit MI 48201

Thurs., April 7, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm *Avoiding Financial Exploitation*

Thurs., April 14, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm *Household Finance*

Thurs., April 21, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm *All about Credit*

Thurs., April 28, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm *Retirement Planning and the Spend Down*

**Bridging Communities**, 6900 McGraw, Detroit MI 48210

Mon., May 2, 10 am - 2:00 pm *Avoiding Financial Exploitation*

Mon., May 9, 10 am - 2:00 pm *Household Finance*

Mon., May 16, 10 am - 2:00 pm *All about Credit*

Mon., May 23, 10 am - 2:00 pm *Retirement Planning and the Spend Down*

ing social security benefits, the differences between defined contribution and defined benefit employer sponsored programs and savings and investment options. The workshop will also introduce investment topics, such as liquidity, simple and

compound interest, risk diversification and investment fees, to ensure participants have tools to evaluate which options will work best to fund their retirement and understand their current retirement holdings.

and, in some cases, provide clues to what's happening elsewhere in our body. Be sure to discuss any concerns you have with your doctor or health professional.

**Symptoms:** A finger that gets stuck – especially when your first wake up in the morning – and is painful when you try to extend it; painful clicking or snapping when you try to flex the affected finger.

What it may mean: Trigger finger, a condition that happens when the tendons that move the fingers thicken or become inflamed. Tendons in the hand are like ropes that move the fingers; these ropes run through tun-

nels, or sheaths, that hold them in place. If the tendon – or the sheath through which it moves – becomes thickened, movement can be difficult. Bending the finger may pull the swollen portion through the narrowed sheath, making a popping or snapping noise and causing pain.

**Treatments:** Use of a splint to keep the finger straight, or in more severe cases, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, steroid injections and/or surgery to loosen the tendon sheath.

## African American Women and Brain Health

A Wayne State University PhD candidate, Shelytia Cocroft, is currently studying the relationship between socioeconomic status and the knowledge, attitudes and practices associated with maintaining cognitive health

among older African American women. Ms. Cocroft is a Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR) Diversity Scholar and received National Institute of Health funding through MCUAAAR to conduct the study.

To date, few studies have examined African Americans' beliefs about cognitive health and the

degree to which these beliefs influences attitudes and behaviors. Through examining brain health perceptions, attitudes and practices, this study seeks to understand whether socioeconomic status (SES) impacts knowledge and attitudes about cognitive health and if behaviors associated with cognitive decline are influenced by knowledge and attitudes.

Ms. Cocroft says the idea for the study was initially informed by personal experience. She lost two grandparents to Alzheimer's disease and gained first-hand knowledge of the conditions that often place African Americans at greater risk. Questioning her own understandings of normal aging and cognitive impairment led her to realize her private challenges

were closely linked to the larger social issue of Alzheimer's disease.

To examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and behaviors associated with maintaining cognitive health the study



*"... the issue of cognitive health should be included in the national dialogue. I also think more attention needs to be paid to African American women and their unique experiences with aging."*

**- Dr. Shelytia Cocroft**

to be paid to African American women and their unique experiences with aging. According to the Alzheimer's Association, African Americans have a higher rate of Alzheimer's, and since we know

women live longer, we suspect African American women will be disproportionately affected by this issue in the future." Given this risk, she hopes this research will help us to better understand providing information on Alzheimer's to the African American community and influence policy surrounding Alzheimer's education and prevention.

To date, she has interviewed 120

female members of the Healthier Black Elders Center who are 65 or older. Ms. Cocroft is grateful to all of the women who participated in her project. "Thank you seems too small a word to fully convey my appreciation," she said. "This is a very important and timely topic and I am grateful to have you all standing with me in the fight against Alzheimer's disease in our community. Your words of wisdom, your faith, and your spirit of perseverance encouraged and inspired me, especially in moments when it seemed that I would not achieve my goal. I greatly appreciate the conversations we shared and the trust you placed in me to bear witness to your stories."

- Diet
- Nutrition
- Brain Exercises
- Physical Activity
- Sleep
- Social Support
- Health Literacy

Why the focus on African American women? "Because women's health is a critical area of study," Ms. Cocroft said, "as we continue to make gains in women's health, I think the issue of cognitive health should be included in the national dialogue. I also think more attention needs



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 NEWSLETTER

## Lunch & Learn



**9:30 am registration and health screenings.**  
**Presentations from 10 am - 12 pm. Lunch will follow.**

### **Tuesday, April 13th**

Delray Center, 420 S Leigh St, Detroit, 48209 10-12pm

#### *Allergy and Asthma Epidemic: Find out the Facts about Treatment*

We are facing more and more challenges regarding allergies and asthma, is it our environment causing these issues or a biological component. Please join Dr. James Blessman, MD, Wayne State University and Kathleen Slonager, Asthma & Allergy Foundation of American MI Chapter as we discuss this topic.

### **Tuesday, May 3rd, 2016**

Boulevard Temple, 2567 W Grand Blvd, Detroit, 48208 10-12pm

#### *Research and How it Links to Our Aging Population*

Cognition and Exercise: Is there a Link?? Our Changing Neighborhoods: Impact on Detroit Seniors. Please join us as Dr. Neha Gothe, PhD, PT and Dr. Heather Fritz, PhD, OTR, both researchers at Wayne State University, discuss their research and how it is impacting the way we age.

### **Thursday, June 2, 2016**

1776 W Warren Ave, Detroit, 48208 10-12pm

#### *Our Changing Brain: What's Age Got to Do with It*

Please join us as Dr. Jeske Damoiseaux, PhD and Dr. Bruno Giordani, PhD, discuss their research findings about Brain Changes that Occur as We age, and Targeting in on Alzheimer's: Advances in Diagnosis.

Events are **FREE** but you must R.S.V.P. by calling Donna at **313-664-2605**

### Fall Follow-up from page 1

pressure and blood sugar levels. We noted a slight increase in blood sugar abnormalities since the past season, but BP readings improved. In addition, over 40 cognitive screenings were completed; seven people were referred for more intense screening and eight were recruited for a study on cognition.

Get ready for the Spring season of Lunch & Learns beginning April 13. We look forward to seeing you there! Schedule and registration information on this page.

Editor - LaToya Hall  
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