



2021 - 2022 Annual Report

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Message from the Director

Dear Friends and Fellow Health Equity Partners,

As we reflect on our past year's accomplishments and challenges, we continue to strive for progress in every aspect of health from access to quality, affordable care to dismantling distrust between biomedical researchers, healthcare providers, and underserved communities.

The concept of **health autonomy** – the right to make informed decisions about your body and wellness – is of paramount importance. Individual health autonomy is a must to support the health each individual wants to achieve; that includes making informed decisions about their healthcare with their provider and health care team.

Equitable access is also essential for every person to achieve their desired health. Several factors influencing access include health literacy, social determinants of health, experiences of racism and distrust, financial toxicity, and a diverse workforce.

Defending health autonomy and healthcare access is critical to our goal of realizing health equity for every individual. We at the Center for Health Equity Transformation fight for health justice and health autonomy, and we will continue to advance and support efforts toward the protection of these fundamental human rights.

We hope you'll enjoy reading about our past year's accomplishments and join us as we expand the horizons of our research endeavors to drive positive change.

Sincerely,



Melissa A. Simon, MD, MPH

Director, Center for Health Equity Transformation



— Dr. Melissa Simon



Our Mission, Vision, and Values

Our Mission — To lift health for all by exposing root causes of health inequities and serving as a hub that pushes boundaries in research, education, workforce development, and community engagement.

Our Vision — To bridge the gaps between research, community needs, and policy by transforming systems and structures so that everyone has the opportunity to achieve their best possible health.

Our Values — **Lift Community Voices:** Our community-based participatory research projects seek guidance and collaboration from community leaders and organizations from the research design to the impact that persists beyond the completion of the projects.

Apply Health Equity Lens to Public Policies: We must acknowledge that the intention behind oppressive policies and practices matters less than their actual impact, and then take action with an anti-racist approach.

Transform Health Outcomes: To create transformational change, we must connect these areas that often operate in silos. We must ensure that the health care and research workforce is a diverse and inclusive one and that we train the next generation to serve with empathy and compassion to mitigate the health outcome disparities that are influenced by racism and implicit biases.

Our Team



- Our CHET team continues to grow, with over 20 staff members across a range of career levels with a shared commitment toward health equity. Between September 2021 and August 2022, we have mentored 12 trainees through our T37 Northwestern University Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training Program (NU-MHRT), 8 Health Equity Scholars, and 27 CHEC Fellows.
- We pride ourselves in being a diverse and inclusive team that champions a wide range of social justice and health equity causes, reflecting the passions of our team members. Our interdisciplinary team have collective experience across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors with subject matter expertise on topics such as racial disparities in maternal health, workforce development, community engagement, health policy, comprehensive sexual health education, cancer disparities, food access, environmental justice, and more.

Research and Scholarship

A majority of CHET's research projects are community-based research projects in which we center community partners throughout the research process and support them in building research infrastructure for their own sustainability needs.

Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC)



ChicagoCHEC is a National Cancer Institute (NCI) U54 comprehensive cancer partnership between the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University, Northeastern Illinois University, and the University of Illinois at Chicago that advances cancer health equity through meaningful scientific discovery, education, training, and community engagement.

In its 7th year, the Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC) continues to successfully conduct transdisciplinary cancer health disparities research projects, engage Chicago communities that are disproportionately impacted by cancer health inequities, and coordinate research education and mentoring opportunities to advance a pipeline of diverse students and early career faculty in cancer research careers. In addition, ChicagoCHEC is fueled by community voices, including strong, expert voices from partner organizations who have been doing incredible work in communities for decades. Our ChicagoCHEC Community Steering Committee (CSC) is made up of passionate and honest voices who speak up and challenge us every day to bring forth solutions to cancer inequities that truly benefit communities.

These next pages provide a glimpse of the high-impact projects and initiatives of the ChicagoCHEC partnership over the past year. For more information about ChicagoCHEC, please visit <http://www.chicagochechec.org/>.

ChicagoCHEC Research

Supporting High Risk African American Men in Research & Engagement in Decision Making for Lung Cancer Screening: The SHARED Project

The SHARED Project engages African American men (AAM) as Citizen Scientists to improve uptake of lung cancer screening. In this project, ChicagoCHEC researchers focus Citizen Scientists efforts on leveraging social networks to engage AAM and supporting and enhancing an Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) evidence-based Decision Aid that promotes shared decision making and subsequent lung cancer screening. Engaging AAM as Citizen Scientists is expected to improve outreach and respond to the needs communities that may traditionally be “unengaged” in the research process and provides an opportunity for the group at the most increased risk for lung cancer, AAM, to directly drive uptake of evidence-based screening.

WeCanManage: An mHealth Self-management Tool to Empower Survivors with Disabilities Due to the Long-term Effects of Cancer and its Treatment

In this project, ChicagoCHEC researchers are developing an innovative mHealth app called WeCanManage (WCM) to empower cancer survivors with disabilities to proactively manage cancer and its consequences as a chronic condition. People with disabilities are an unrecognized health disparities population and are often excluded from the cancer health equity agenda. Indeed, cancer survivors indicate that their long-term disability needs are inadequately addressed across the cancer care and survivorship continuum. The WCM research project is an opportunity to enhance the cancer community’s understanding of this population and to develop evidence-informed interventions to better meet the needs of people with the ‘double whammy’ of cancer and disability

Social Correlates of Variation in Intestinal and Oral Microbiome Among Hematopoietic Stem Cell Transplant Patients: A Geographic Exploration in the City of Chicago

This pilot study was designed to lay the groundwork for an ecological analysis of variation in microbiome diversity. A large, diverse, and segregated city like Chicago has known disparate outcomes in various malignancies and is an ideal urban center to explore the role of geographic variation in gut microbiome diversity. We propose an innovative, multi-institutional study evaluating serial changes in intestinal and oral gut microbiota amongst 50 hematopoietic stem cell transplant patients selected from widely diverse areas characteristic of large populations in the Chicago metropolitan area. The study will demonstrate the feasibility of analyzing the association of microbiome diversity with early clinical outcomes among stem cell transplant patients residing in the Chicago area. These findings are expected to better elucidate the role that area characteristics, as reflected by diet and the socioeconomic characteristics of geographic location, may play in intestinal gut microbiome diversity.

Since its inception, ChicagoCHEC has funded eleven research teams through the ChicagoCHEC Incubator, Catalyst Grant Program, and NCI supplement funding. To learn more about ChicagoCHEC research projects, visit www.chicagochec.org

ChicagoCHEC

Outreach and Community Engagement

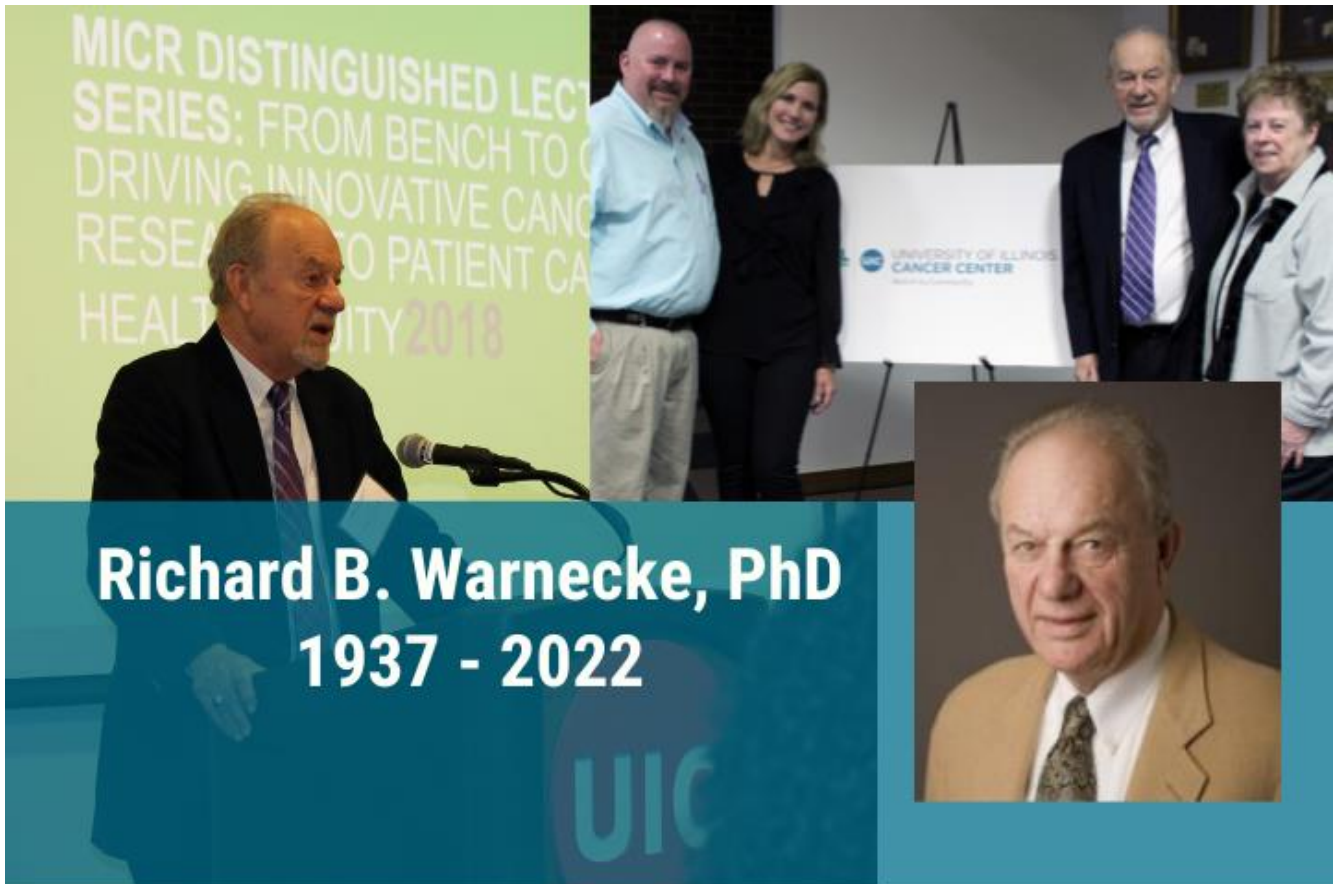
The ChicagoCHEC Outreach Core (OC) leads community engagement, cancer education, and outreach activities to foster meaningful interactions between cancer centers, academic institutions, and the communities they serve. In concert with NCI's National Outreach Network, our Outreach Core activities will yield valuable data on factors associated with poorer cancer outcomes experienced by some communities, as well as factors associated with improved cancer outcomes experienced by other communities. Identifying the driving forces behind cancer inequities provides a unique and powerful opportunity for ChicagoCHEC to translate research findings into direct action.

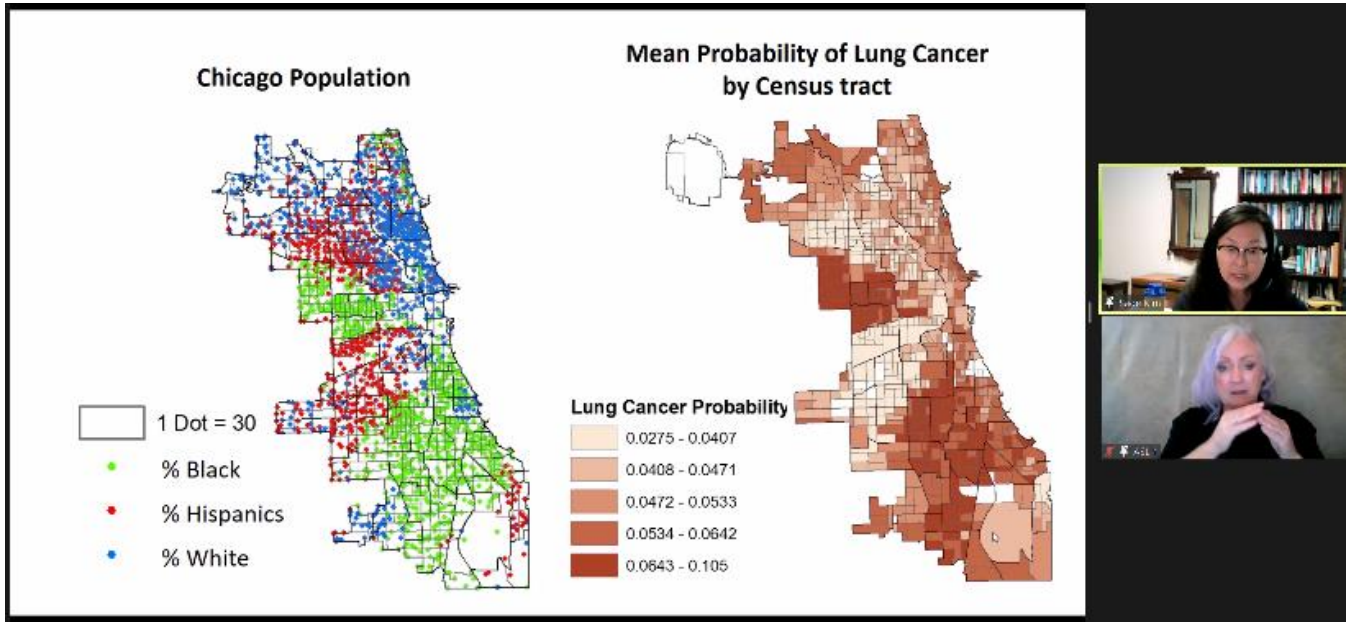
ChicagoCHEC has organized, sponsored, and collaborated with many community outreach, education, and support group events in the past year. We have reached over 1,000 participants through these outreach activities and resources for cancer screening, support groups, early diagnosis, and treatment.

ChicagoCHEC 7TH ANNUAL COMMUNITY FORUM Cancer Health and Mental Wellness – YOU, Family, Community

Every year, ChicagoCHEC hosts a community forum that brings together local residents, survivors, caregivers, students, researchers, and community leaders to share stories, resources, and research results.

We honored our beloved Dr. Richard Warnecke (1937 - 2022) who served on UI Cancer Center's NCI ChicagoCHEC Internal Advisory Committee and on the ACS-Illinois Cancer Health Equity Research Center grant's Community Advisory Board. The 2022 Annual Community Forum featured diverse community conversations on the cancer caregiver and survivorship experience, the impact of stress on cancer, and prioritizing wellness. Find more information and the recordings at: <https://forum2022.chicagochechec.org/>.



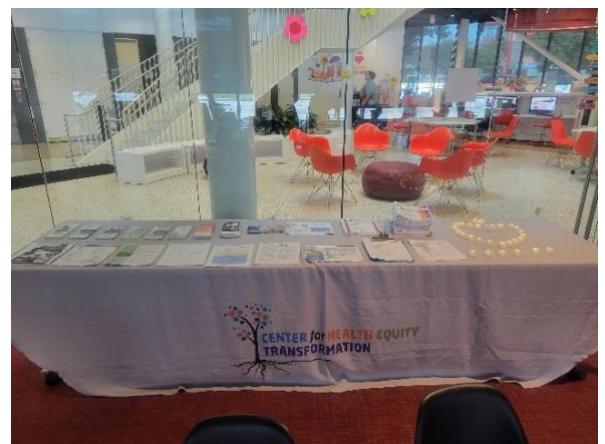


Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative

Northwestern University, Northwestern Illinois University, University of Illinois at Chicago
US4 Comprehensive Cancer Partnership to Advance Cancer Health Equity

The Impact of COVID-19 on Cancer Screening: A Community Led Collaboration with ChicagoCHEC

Keith B. Naylor, MD
University of Illinois Chicago
Outreach Core Co-Leader

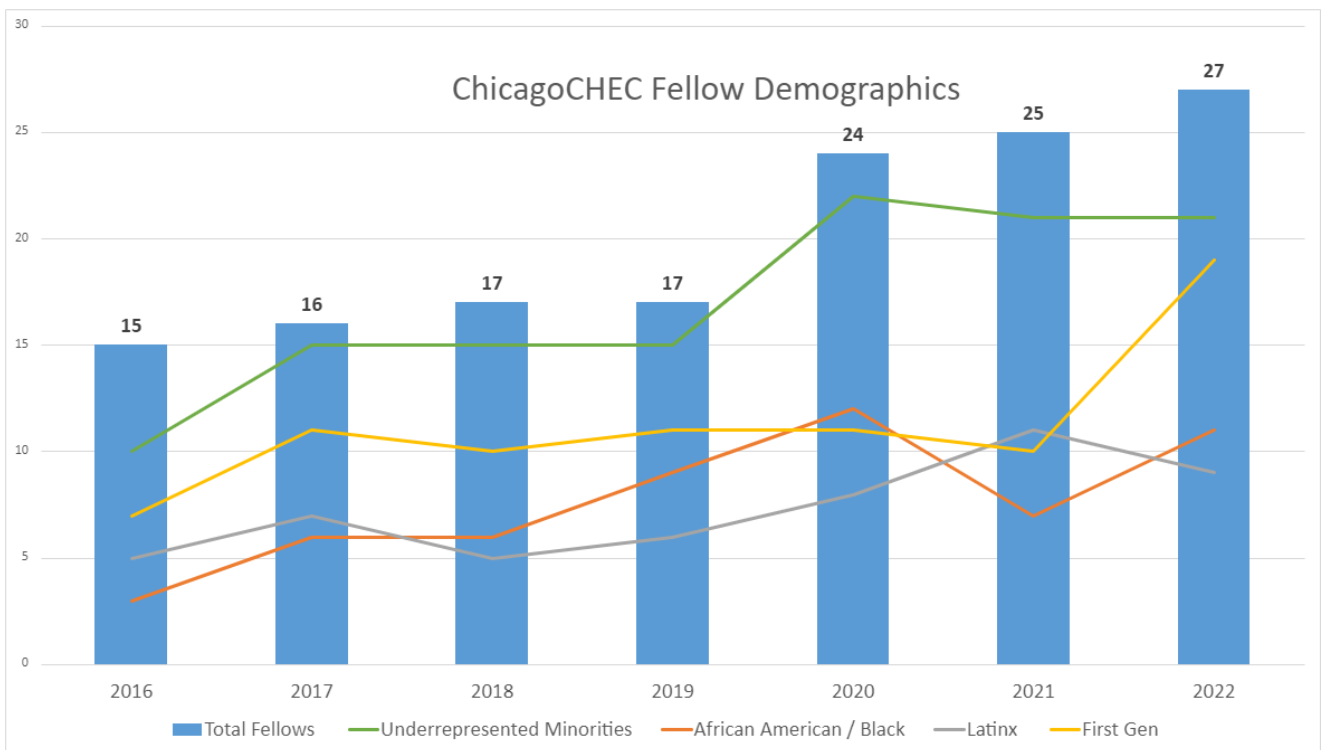


ChicagoCHEC

Research Education

ChicagoCHEC Fellows Program

ChicagoCHEC offers the Summer Fellows Program as one of CHET’s signature workforce development programs. CHEC Fellows are recruited from the undergraduate body from Northwestern University, University of Illinois at Chicago, Northeastern University, and the City Colleges of Chicago. The past summer, ChicagoCHEC accepted 27 fellows to its Summer Fellows Program, the largest cohort yet!



Demographic Characteristics of the CHEC Fellows (2016 - 2022)



Abdalla Mohammed



Abdinasir Shekhabdi



Alondra Perez



Anelly Cardenas



Christina Basourakos



Citlalli Santiago



Eyitomilayo Anako



Gabriella Ballestas



Grace Doakes



Jesus Rivera



Jordon Shaw



Jorge Heneche



Kamyra Jennings



Kimberly Nu-Tall



Leslie Diaz



Melania Anton



Mina Seals



Monserratt Jasso



Mykee Vives



Norma Marshall



Oluwatosin Okoh



Pacifique Uwiringiyimana



Patrick Ryczek



Rabia Ghanimah



Safiy Khan



Sana Murtaza Bhalli



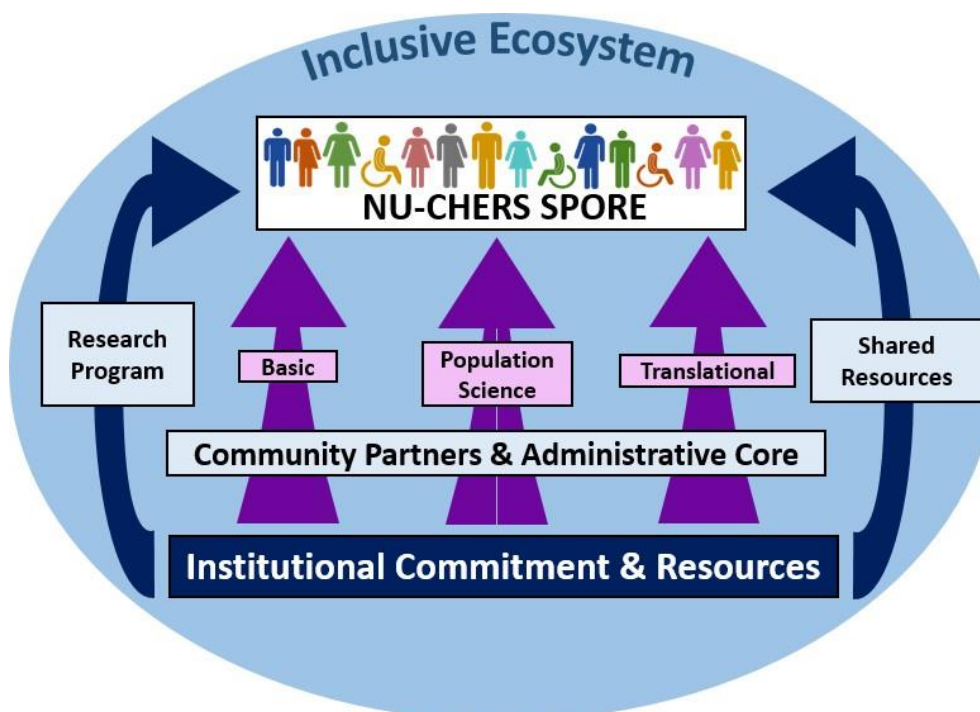
Stephanie Maynez



NU-CHERS

Northwestern University Cancer Health Equity Research SPORE

The Northwestern University Cancer Health Equity Research SPORE (NU-CHERS) is a National Cancer Institute funded developmental Specialized Program of Research Excellence and a collaborative program between CHET and the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University (P20CA233304). NU-CHERS will generate scientific findings and establish sustainable, collaborative, academic and community infrastructure that will serve as the foundation for a comprehensive translational cancer research program focused on gynecologic cancer health disparities – the first of its kind in the nation. NU-CHERS has spearheaded the development of a centralized biobank of human gynecologic cancer tissue specimens to be used in health disparities research studies. NU-CHERS teams with basic and clinical investigators to conduct innovative translational research focused on understanding and reducing gynecologic cancer disparities. The initial translational research focus of NU-CHERS is on endometrial and ovarian cancer disparities experienced by Black women. More information can be found at: www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/chet/research/p20-spore.html



NU-CHERS Research

Research Project 1: Understanding Racial Disparity in Endometrial Cancer through Tumor Genomics

Leaders: J. Julie Kim, PhD and Dario R. Roque, MD

Racial disparity is present in endometrial cancer with black women exhibiting increased aggressive disease and a higher death rate compared to white women. This project investigates the biological etiology through tumor genomics and explores racial disparity for progesterin response given that young black women exhibit advanced disease with worse prognosis compared to young white women. This is the first comprehensive genomics analysis of endometrial tumors to study the molecular etiologies of racial disparities.

Research Project 2: Tumor Methyloomics Analysis Link with Racial Disparities in Ovarian Cancer

Leaders: Daniela Matei, MD and Emma Barber, MD

Ovarian cancer remains the deadliest cancer with significantly reduced survival rates among black women compared to white women, despite similar stage distribution and histological types at diagnosis. This project focuses on epigenetic markers, particularly DNA methylation, which we hypothesize function as a link between socio-economic or environmental factors and genomic alterations to alter the course of the disease and response to therapy. We aim to identify key oncogenic drivers regulated epigenetically in tumors from black vs. white women and generate useful new resources to continue to address biological questions related to racial differences in ovarian cancer response to treatment.

Over the past year, the NU-CHERS program:

- Enrolled 230 participants willing to donate specimens yielding 1,800 unique samples of blood and tissue from cervical, endometrial, and ovarian oncology (suspicious and/or confirmed) cases. 40% of participants identify as a member of an underrepresented minority group.
- Established a partnership with John H. Stroger Hospital of Cook County to increase the diversity of samples available in the biobank.
- Expanded research infrastructure to make significant strides in translational science to support the goal of submission of an NCI full P50 SPORE in Gynecology Cancer Disparities.

華埠醫療導航計劃

CHINATOWN PATIENT NAVIGATION PROGRAM



The Chinatown Patient Navigation (PN) Program is a National Cancer Institute (NCI) funded research study that focuses on increasing cancer screening and enhancing cancer care for the residents of Chicago’s Greater Chinatown area. The program first launched in 2013 and navigated nearly 800 women for their breast and cervical cancer screenings. The program’s success granted us a 5-year renewal from the NCI in 2020 to expand patient navigation as “PN 2.0”, implementing strategies and tools to support coordination and integration of Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) related efforts across community oncology and community social service settings.



Qualitative interviews were conducted with healthcare and social services providers in 2021 and the data were analyzed to guide strategies for the PN 2.0 intervention development and implementation. Participant recruitment for the PN 2.0 trial began in March 2022, and over 300 men and women from the Greater Chinatown area have been enrolled to date. Our team of navigators have initiated navigation services through all eligible preventive cancer screenings and other social service referrals with enrolled participants. In addition, our navigation team has been speaking at or tabling at community centers, library, health fairs, and other street fairs and events around Chinatown. Our team is able to reconnect with many previously enrolled participants and recruit their family and friends as well.



4R Care Coordination for Patients with Cancer

4R: The Right Information and Right Care for the Right Patient at the Right Time

Primary care in community health clinics is crucial for making care accessible for all individuals. However, patients facing a cancer diagnosis must seek care outside of this more familiar setting.

Oftentimes when patients receive a new diagnosis of cancer, their primary care needs are markedly disrupted. Building on our Center's extensive experience in community-engaged intervention research with providers and health systems addressing needs of medically underserved communities, and in partnership with AllianceChicago, we have implemented the 4R Oncology® Model, a cancer care coordination project that responds directly to our local community health center partners' needs and uses a care plan approach to help primary care providers and care coordinators ensure that their cancer patients receive the highest quality cancer care.

The 4R Oncology® Model (4R, Right Information and Right Care for the Right Patient at the Right Time) is an evidence-based intervention that aims to address gaps in care coordination, patient-clinician communication, and other breakdowns in healthcare delivery across primary, oncology, and specialized care. The 4R project was funded by the Merck Foundation for 5 years and was completed in August 2022. Throughout this project, we worked with Howard Brown Health and Near North Health Services to conduct a care coordination process with patients with cancer. Our work on the impacts of COVID on the cancer care coordination process and particular considerations of implementing 4R with LGBTQ+ patients was presented at the AACR Annual Conferences in 2021 and 2022. To supplement this work, in the Fall of 2020 we were awarded funding through the ECOG-ACRIN collaborative to improve the 4R process for LGBTQ+ patients with cancer. We conducted interviews with clinical care team members, community organization members, cancer survivors, and support people, to understand the needs and barriers around cancer care and primary care coordination. Findings from this supplemental project elucidated the need for further improvements to cancer care coordination for LGBTQ+ individuals.

The OPTIMIZE Study

Optimizing Patient Navigation for Perinatal Care

Black pregnant persons experience profound health disparities in the United States, with Black moms dying from pregnancy-related causes at the highest rate of any other group.



Most of these deaths are preventable. Given this public health crisis, there is an urgent need to improve perinatal care, which is the care before and after pregnancy, for Black pregnant persons. Funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, the ongoing OPTIMIZE research study is testing a comprehensive perinatal care checklist with patient navigation support. The study is working toward increasing pregnant persons' ability to attend their pre and postnatal visits, receive comprehensive care during and in between visits, and by connecting them to resources to address social determinants of health needs.

Our Center is partnering with Access Community Health Network (ACCESS) and AllianceChicago to conduct this study in community health centers in Chicago. The OPTIMIZE intervention, which focuses on trust building and patient navigation support during and after pregnancy, was launched in Summer 2021. The ACCESS and AllianceChicago informatics teams built flowsheets within their electronic health record (EHR) systems to prompt providers through a series of questions aimed at building trust with patients and understanding their needs. The EHR flowsheets also allow navigators to access information about patients' progress and act as a liaison between the patient and health care team. Patient recruitment and implementation of the intervention was initiated in Summer 2021 and recruitment is ongoing. The information gained through the planning portions of this project, including interviews with patients and stakeholders to develop the ultimate intervention, was published in 2022 in the HPHR online journal: <https://hphr.org/39-post-simon/>.



WELL MAMA

Doula Project

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) persons experience profound maternal health disparities in the US, including rising rates of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity. In Fall 2021, CHET was awarded a 5-year grant from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities to enhance doula care support for BIPOC birthing persons. This study will develop a Well-Mama intervention for pregnant and postpartum BIPOC persons, centered around Community Doula Navigators conducting in-person and telehealth check-ins on 5 priority areas (mental health, cardiovascular symptoms, safety, opioid/substance abuse, and social support), supplemented with virtual support groups and labor support. We will conduct a randomized trial in Chicago, IL, Newark, NJ, and Baton Rouge, LA to evaluate the impact of the Well-Mama intervention on patient receipt of prenatal and postpartum care.

Interviews with community stakeholders and patients were initiated in Summer 2022 and are currently underway. To inform the final intervention design, this qualitative assessment stage aims to identify barriers and facilitators of access to healthcare, experiences of racism in care, and perceptions regarding support persons, hybrid care delivery models, and care team cohesion. The next phase of the study will begin in early 2023 with the launch of the randomized trial.

To advance maternal health equity on the national stage, the Well Mama study formed a Maternal Health Advisory Board. Comprised of key stakeholders and community leaders, the Advisory Board represents a nationwide collaborative that will guide strategic efforts towards sustained, community-driven change, with the ultimate vision of eliminating acute maternal health disparities in the United States.

Community Scientist Project

Leveraging Citizen Scientists to Infuse Community Perspectives within Bench and Translational Science at Lurie Cancer Center

This project focuses on connecting Community Scientists and Lurie Cancer center (LCC) scientists to develop more approachable and community-centered research material. During small group meetings between the paired Community Scientists and LCC Basic Scientists facilitated by CHET Director, Dr. Melissa Simon, LCC Basic Scientists received valuable insight from Community Scientists regarding (1) the accessibility of the language with which they explain their work and (2) the applicability and significance of their research to the communities that Community Scientists themselves serve. During these meetings, Community Scientists and LCC Basic Scientists worked together to develop concise, accessible, and relevant descriptions of LCC Scientists' research that could be incorporated into infographics. Further group meetings focused on revising the bespoke infographics with feedback from both LCC Basic Scientists and Community Scientists. These infographics will be kept in a library and will be used by both Community Scientists and LCC Basic Scientists for outreach and community engagement efforts in the future.



Community Engagement Initiatives & Activities

In addition to CHET’s community-based research projects, we host and participate in multiple activities that promote community engagement and information sharing with the public. Alongside our work with community partners, CHET works with Northwestern Medicine (NM) health systems leaders, clinicians, faculty, residents/fellows, students, and staff to create and support health equity related programming across NM, Feinberg School of Medicine (FSM), and Northwestern University. CHET engages in collaborative efforts with NM Health Equity Teams from the medical student level to university-wide level. These activities include our CHETchat Spotlight Series, our SkinnyTrees: Lift Health for All podcast, and other health equity related events, as we highlight in the following pages.



CHETchat Spotlight Series

CHETchats highlight the equity work of our invited speakers and fosters dialogues and ideas about the ways that attendees can engage in work that promotes health equity. These events are open to the entire Northwestern community and the public. The Discussions of Mistrust in Healthcare and Research Entities three-part series centered on having open conversations about academic research distrust in communities of color. The wrongful acts of harm committed by academic entities served as the framework for discussions of distrust within marginalized communities and research. Part one focused on how academic institutions instilled fear of research into communities of color and featured a candid conversation with Dr. Linda Rae Murray, and Jose E. Lopez served to provide a historical context on how distrust developed. Part two discussed reporting contemporary harms and identifying current protection measures for communities of color with Drs. Josef Ben Levi, Erin Paquette, and Nita K. Lee. Part three concluded the series and explained how to foster reciprocal relationships between communities of color and research with Dr. Masahito Jimbo, Dr. Marquita Lewis-Thames, and Paris Thomas.

SkinnyTrees Podcast



SkinnyTrees: Lift Health for All Podcast aims to highlight voices of people from the research, community, and policy worlds who are doing work that advances health equity. By doing so, SkinnyTrees is creating an easy and accessible way for a larger audience to learn about the health equity work being conducted at Northwestern University and in the

City of Chicago. Since its inception, the podcast has produced over 30 episodes covering topics from the impact of COVID-19 on Chicago communities to a limited series on maternal health and wellness. For more information, you can visit our website at skinnytreespodcast.com or subscribe to the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, or Google Play.



Health Equity Footprint

In 2020, CHET began collecting information from Northwestern faculty to highlight the depth and breadth of their health equity-related work, programming, and research. This Health Equity Footprint is an online catalog intended to help students, trainees, and researchers identify potential mentors and collaborators with shared experiences or research interests.



NUFSM Health Equity Week 2022

In partnership with the McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University, we hosted a curated series of moderated sessions on a variety of topics. Thought leaders and scholars shared insights into the roots of healthcare disparities and facilitated discussions that inform and inspire innovative solutions. More info is available at:

<https://www.mcgaw.northwestern.edu/health-equity-week/>

Youth Leadership Events program

First created in honor of Dr. Virginia Bishop - a tireless health equity hero and fierce advocate for the advancement of underserved youths - the Youth Leadership Events program has hosted three informal virtual conversations for underserved Chicago Youths. These conversations featured Chicago health experts such as Melissa Simon, MD, MPH, Geraldine Luna, MD, and Karriem Watson, DHSc, and aimed to inform Chicago Youth on topics such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the roles that youth can play in combating misinformation within their social circles. With this program, CHET seeks to promote health equity while providing Chicago Youths with an early introduction into the fields of public health and medicine as well as the opportunity for their voices to be at the center of public health conversations.

HEALTH EQUITY

THE VIRGINIA BISHOP INAUGURAL YOUTH LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE:

COVID AND GUN VIOLENCE FROM A HEALTH EQUITY PERSPECTIVE

JOIN US VIRTUALLY
November 7, 2020 | 10 AM to 1 PM

Health equity is when everyone has the opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Long-standing barriers have put many racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk for illnesses.

Youth Leadership Event

A-Day-in-the-Life...

of a Research Specialist
Barbara J. Williams, MPH

Join Us Virtually
April 30, 2022 | 11 AM - 12 PM

Join CHET's Youth Leadership Event series featuring professionals from different disciplines. Learn about their real life stories including challenges they have overcome, accomplishments, and what their day to day career lives entail.

Biography

Barbara J. Williams, MPH is a Research Specialist for the University of Illinois Cancer Center with a research concentration of colorectal health and smoking cessation. She received a Bachelor's Degree in Community Health in 2008 from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Master's Degree in Public Health from DePaul University in 2013. Barbara has over 10 years of public health experience working in the fields of Maternal and Child Health, dental care, cancer, diabetes, sickle cell disease, asthma, dementia, Alzheimer's, COVID-19, HIV and AIDS. Barbara J. Williams currently has her own business called Plus for You Wellness, LLC where she does public health consulting and event planning which partners with multiple organizations to educate individuals that will inspire communities to live healthier lifestyles, advocate to receive quality health care, and provide guidance for resources and partnerships. As a Public Health practitioner, her background includes research, health education, case management, care coordination, community engagement, outreach, and wellness.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP EVENT

**STATE OF THE PANDEMIC:
WHAT YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES
NEED TO KNOW AS COVID VACCINE
ELIGIBILITY EXPANDS**

JOIN US VIRTUALLY
JUNE 5, 2021 | 11 AM - 12 PM

LEARN MORE ABOUT RE-INTEGRATING TO SCHOOL, VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN, AND THE COVID-19 VACCINE OPTIONS. BRING QUESTIONS THAT YOU HAVE ABOUT COVID-19 TO BE ANSWERED IN REAL-TIME BY:

DR. GERALDINE LUNA, MD
MEDICAL DIRECTOR
COVID-19 INITIATIVE AT THE CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

DR. MELISSA SIMON, MD
DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR HEALTH EQUITY
TRANSFORMATION AT
NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

TO ATTEND THIS EVENT, PLEASE REGISTER IN ADVANCE:
<http://bit.ly/JunesYLE>

Youth Leadership Event

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

**A Conversation on the
Current State of the
Pandemic with**

**Dr. Geraldine
Luna, MD**
Medical Director
COVID-19 Initiative at the
Chicago Department of Public
Health

Please join us on **July 20, 2022 at 9:30am - 10:30am** virtually for a conversation on what has and hasn't changed three years into the COVID-19 pandemic.

- What types of precautions should you be taking?
- What should we know about the BA.5 variant? How is it different from past variants?
- What is the likelihood of needing a second booster? Should we continue masking?

Scan QR code to RSVP or click here:
<https://bit.ly/3ArZMdL>

Increasing Access to Health Information and Diversity in Clinical Trials

Many of CHET's projects and activities focus on increasing access to health information and eliminating barriers to participation in clinical trials and research studies.



The ECOG-ACRIN SUPPORT Trial: Multilevel Intervention to Improve Diverse Enrollment in Cancer Clinical Trials

Funding from the National Cancer Institute's Connecting Underrepresented Populations to Clinical Trials (CUSP2CT) Program will support a 5-year study to leverage the collective resources of the ECOG ACRIN Cancer Research Group (EA), our team's decades of work on improving diversity in clinical trials, and our foundational work in patient navigation and clinical trials research literacy tools to create and evaluate an ECOG-ACRIN Trial SUPPORT Toolkit (SUPPORT intervention). This intervention aims to improve Black and Latino referral and enrollment in active NCI-supported therapeutic trials in head and neck, thoracic, and genitourinary cancers, and leukemia and myeloma. The multilevel EA SUPPORT intervention consists of a Clinical Trials (CT) research literacy tool and CT Resource Navigators based at EA who will interface with patients, providers, and community oncology site staff to improve referral and enrollment of Black and Latino patients to CTs. This Hybrid Type 1 cluster-randomized, roll-out effectiveness-implementation trial will be conducted in 10 community oncology practice sites (with N= 500 Black and Latino patients with cancer). Our collaborative infrastructure and EA SUPPORT multilevel intervention seeks to shift the current clinical trial research base referral and enrollment paradigm and directly remove multiple levels of barriers through innovations in CT navigation and CT research literacy tools.



Health for All: Library Partnerships to Advance Diversity in Clinical Trials

Funding from the National Library of Medicine supported the development of CHET's Health for All platform (healthforallproject.org), a web-based tool developed through a design thinking approach to be used in public libraries and hospital patient education centers. The goal of the Health for All tool is to help the general public learn more about clinical trials and to specifically increase clinical trials awareness and knowledge among populations underrepresented in clinical trials. Due to their accessibility and roles as information gatekeepers, librarians and health providers that serve populations that are underrepresented in clinical trials are promising partners for disseminating clinical trials information. In this past year, the Health for All team completed the evaluation phase with over 100 participants with virtual events co-facilitated with Chicago Public Libraries. The Health for All tool will be deployed in CHET's recently funded NCI Connecting Underrepresented Populations to Clinical Trials (CUSP2CT) study.

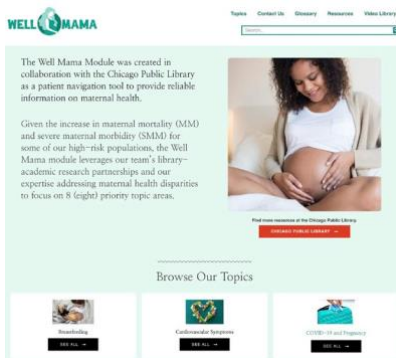


Advancing Library-Academic Medical Center Partnerships to Navigate Wellness and Scale Preventive Services Access

The Navigating Wellness tool (navigatingwellness.org) aims to empower library patrons with accessible health information that they can use to seek out preventive health services, while also empowering librarians to support their patron's search for health information. This tool improves communication and facilitates understanding across patients and healthcare providers, fostering the trust and understanding required to encourage underserved patients to avail themselves of appropriate preventive services. In the past year, the research team has tested the prototype and hosted co-design sessions with Chicago Public Library patrons, librarians, and other stakeholders to improve the design and usability with the next iteration.

“Well Mama” Navigating Wellness

CHET received a one-year Administrative Supplement from the Office of the Director of the NIH to add a maternal health focus to the Navigating Wellness tool, as part of NIH's Implementing a Maternal health and Pregnancy Outcomes Vision for Everyone (IMPROVE) Initiative. We developed the Navigating Wellness: “Well Mama” Module (well-mama.org) with resources on mental health/depression; cardiovascular symptoms; safety; opioid/substance abuse; and social support. The “Well Mama” module also includes a podcast series featuring community leaders, clinicians, and other experts in the field of maternal health.



All of Us

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Precision Medicine Initiative (*All of Us* Research Program)

Funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the All of Us Research Program aims to enroll one million or more people from across the US to help speed up medical research. People who join will share information about their health, habits, and what it's like where they live. By looking for patterns, researchers will learn more about what affects people's health. The All of Us Research Program will be one of the most diverse health databases in history. Researchers will use the data to learn how our biology, lifestyle, and environment affect health. This could help them develop better treatments and ways to prevent different diseases. The program began national enrollment in 2018. In the past year, the program has shared DNA results to participants and contributed to COVID-19 research by creating the COVID-19 Participant Experience (COPE) Survey and testing blood samples for antibodies to help fight the next pandemic. Dr. Simon serves as the IL All of Us Study's Patient and Community Engagement Leader.

All of Us By the Numbers



More than 529,000 participants who have completed the consent process.

529,000 +



More than 371,000 participants fully enrolled.*

371,000 +



More than 2,400 research projects are using *All of Us* data.

2,400 +

Infographic from the *All of Us* September 2022 Newsletter

*Fully enrolled participants are those who have shared their health information with *All of Us*, including giving blood and urine or saliva samples.



Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University: Office of Equity & Minority Health

The Office of Equity and Minority Health strives to address the unique cancer issues facing minority and medically underserved populations. Dr. Melissa Simon serves as the Associate Director and works to reduce cancer health disparities by focusing on the following:

- **Workforce diversity:** Enhance training for minority individuals pursuing healthcare or biomedical research careers, particularly those focusing on cancer
- **Advocacy and public policy:** Inform the public of cancer policy issues and increase awareness of our established advocacy efforts and self-advocacy skills
- **Community engagement and organizing:** Partner with a broad range of community and public health organizations to better respond to the needs of minority and medically underserved groups



ECOG-ACRIN Health Equity Committee

Dr. Simon is the current chair of the ECOG-ACRIN Research Group's Health Equity Committee. The ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group is a collaboration between the Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) and the American College of Radiology Imaging Network (ACRIN). The Health Equity Committee specifically ensures that racial justice and health equity are embedded within cancer clinical trials. These considerations include a broad definition of underserved populations, allowing the committee to ensure that research efforts include a full representation and accrual of underserved groups.

Diversifying the Workforce and Training the Next Generation of Researchers

Along with our ChicagoCHEC Fellows Program, we are working to diversify the healthcare workforce and future researchers in novel ways. Our NIH Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) Program, T37 Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training Program, Health Equity Scholars Program, and Career911 online course are just some of the many faculty initiatives, workforce training, and educational programs offered by the Center for Health Equity Transformation.



NURTURE

Northwestern University Recruitment to Transform Under-Representation and achieve Equity

The Northwestern University Recruitment to Transform Under-Representation and achieve Equity (NURTURE) Program seeks to accelerate institutional culture change toward inclusive excellence through innovative institutional initiatives in hiring, mentoring, promotion and tenure, evaluation, and institutional accountability to ensure that all faculty can thrive.

NURTURE features cluster hiring of a cohort of 15 new early-career faculty in three scientific neighborhoods: Cancer; Cardiovascular; and Brain, Mind and Behavior — unified by a cross cutting theme of “Cells to Community.” NURTURE is a collaborative initiative among Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine, McCormick School of Engineering, and Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences.

NURTURE is supported by an NIH award to Northwestern University through the Office of Strategic Coordination/Office of the NIH Director as part of the NIH Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) Program (award number U54CA272163). The NIH FIRST Program aims to transform academic culture to build a self-reinforcing community of scientists committed to diversity and inclusive excellence.

CHET Director Dr. Melissa Simon serves as the Contact Principal Investigator; alongside NURTURE Multiple Principal Investigators Clyde Yancy, MD, MSc, vice dean for Diversity and Inclusion at Feinberg School of Medicine; and Eric Perreault, PhD, associate dean for Research in the McCormick School of Engineering.

For more information about NURTURE, visit <https://nurture.northwestern.edu>.

T37 Northwestern University Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training Program (NU-MHRT)

The T37 Northwestern University Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training Program (NU-MHRT) provides health disparities research training experiences to minority and other underrepresented students and trainees at the undergraduate through postdoctoral levels in order to prepare and enhance the next generation of health sciences researchers committed to improving minority health and reducing health disparities. Trainees can focus their research and skill development on any aspect of interest that advances health equity, including but not limited to basic, translational, clinical, and population science. Research theme areas can include women's health, cancer, health care quality and patient-centered outcomes research, chronic diseases, global health, mental health, etc. This program is supported by NIH's National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities and allows CHET to recruit between eight to ten T37 trainees per year.

T37 Trainees



Jacqueline Bannon, PhD, RN

Jacqueline is a passionate advocate for nursing research and HIV health equity. After completing a 24-month T37 post-doctoral training with faculty mentor Judith Moskowitz, she is continuing her health equity research as a post-doctoral fellow with the Center for Health Services and Outcomes Research. In 2022, Jackie published a study of an implementation strategy for mental health interventions for people with HIV, a systematic review of neighborhood-level influences on HIV vulnerability, two qualitative studies of women's perceptions of pre-exposure prophylaxis, and is last author on a study published in the *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* on inclusive sexual health communication between parents and children. She has also submitted an F32 individual post-doctoral fellowship proposal as principal investigator to study experiences and correlates of self-care among people with HIV and heart failure. In 2021, Jackie presented on her HIV implementation science research to the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care Adherence Conference and the Biomedical HIV Prevention Summit.



Tonia Branche, MD

Dr. Branche served as chief resident at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. She is currently a Neonatology Fellow at Northwestern Medicine/Lurie Children's Hospital. She began her postdoctoral T37 training with mentor James Collins Jr, MD, MPH in May 2022, and is conducting research on racial disparities in infant mortality among preterm infants with congenital heart defects.



Shawnese Gilpin Clark, MD, MPH

Dr. Clark is a postdoctoral trainee who started her second year in the T37 program on July 1, 2022. She has been working in the ARISE (Adversity, Racism, Inequities, Structures, and Empowerment) Health Lab with her faculty mentor Nia Heard-Garris, MD, MSc on the Double Pandemic Study. This research examines the influence of both the COVID-19 pandemic and exposure to racial injustice on adolescent psychological distress, assesses the relationship between the double pandemic and health—and the potential moderating effect of socio-economic status and geography—and develops expert consensus, using a modified Delphi method, on how to approach conversations about racial injustice in pediatric clinical settings. Shawnese holds an MD from the University of Maryland and an MPH from George Washington University.



Charles Logan, MD

Dr. Logan is currently a surgical resident and a Surgical Outcomes & Quality Improvement Center (SOQIC) Fellow who completed his postdoctoral T37 training with mentors David Odell, MD, Joseph Feinglass, PhD, David Bentrem, MD, and Ryan Merkow, MD, and published two original research reports on his studies of rural lung cancer health disparities. “National trends in the quality of segmentectomy for lung cancer” was published in the Journal of Thoracic Cardiovascular Surgery and “Rural-urban survival disparities for patients with surgically treated lung cancer” in the Journal of Surgical Oncology. During his training, Charles also presented his research at 2022 conferences held by the Academic Surgical Congress, the General Thoracic Surgical Club, the Society of Thoracic Surgeons, and the Western Thoracic Surgical Association, among others. Charles is continuing his research as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Surgery at Northwestern Feinberg School of Medicine and completing his Master's in Health Services and Outcomes Research from Northwestern's Center for Education in Health Sciences.



Cordero McCall, MPH, MBA

Cordero is a first-year medical student at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW). During his 16-month post-baccalaureate T37 training, he worked with Adam Murphy, MD on prostate cancer health disparities and with Melissa Simon, MD, MPH and Serdar Bulun, MD on gynecological cancer health disparities. Cordero co-authored an abstract on the role of vitamin D in prostate cancer disparities faced by Black men that was published by the Journal of Urology, and he is the first author on a narrative review on racial disparities in uterine leiomyosarcoma, a rare but aggressive cancer, submitted to the International Journal of Gynecological Cancer. He was recently accepted into the MCW's The Clinical and Translational Research (CTR) Pathway, a research training program for MCW medical students.



Shaunté McKay, MD

Shaunté's project is focused on determining disparities in referral rates to Pediatric GI clinics for racial/ethnic minorities and patients with low socioeconomic status that have functional abdominal pain disorders. Her project aims to identify barriers to care, including provider bias, systemic bias, and individual/cultural factors contributing to health disparities and adverse outcomes in patients with functional abdominal pain disorders. Shaunté is currently a Pediatric Gastroenterology Fellow at Lurie Children's Hospital.



Amanda Nili

Amanda is working on a research project studying health disparities in early identification of childhood neurodevelopmental disorders in order to improve methodologies and reduce overidentification which can lead to overmedication and preschool expulsion. Amanda is currently a PhD candidate in Clinical Psychology at Northwestern and plans to publish the results of her research on equitable early childhood mental health identification.



Julianna Perez, PhD

Dr. Perez is continuing her research on the contribution of social-cultural factors and epigenetic mechanisms to vitamin D production and long-term health consequences for males and females. Her research as a T37 trainee has focused on the impact of vitamin D on immune markers and long-term illness in a cohort in the Cebu Longitudinal Health and Nutritional Survey in the Philippines. Julie is currently a Post-Doctoral Fellow in Anthropology at Northwestern University.



Sebastian Rodriguez, PhD

Sebastian completed his PhD in Statistics during his 24-month pre-doctoral T37 training, which he completed in December 2021. With his faculty mentor, Noelle Samia, PhD, Sebastian studied the long-term trends in malaria incidence in Burkina Faso and the effects of differential health facility reporting rates and changes in health-seeking behavior. Based on this research, Sebastian built spatio-temporal models for assessing the efficacy of recent interventions to prevent infections among children during the high transmission season. Sebastian is currently employed as a Decision Analytics Associate at the Chicago-based health care consultant firm ZS Consulting.



Charesa Smith, MD

Dr. Smith is a University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) general surgery resident who is participating in the T37 program during her research sabbatical. She started her T37 in July 2022, working with Mehul Raval, MD, MS in the Northwestern Quality Improvement, Research, & Education in Surgery (NQUIRES) collaborative, investigating health disparities in children's surgical care access and outcomes. Charesa is also a Pediatric Surgery Research Fellow at Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago.



Kevin Wamala

Kevin began his T37 training in February 2021 and has contributed to CHET's Community Scientist, Chinatown Patient Navigation 2.0, and Health for All projects. Kevin co-authored several conference abstracts related to these projects and is now starting his first year at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine. He hopes to focus his studies on health innovation and utilizing technology for underserved populations.



Tabitha Willis

Tabitha graduated from the Ohio State University with a BS in 2022 and returned to her hometown of Chicago to begin a postbaccalaureate T37 training at the Center for Health Equity Transformation with mentor Melissa Simon, MD, MPH. She is working on the Community Science Metals Project which is collecting data on heavy metal contamination among Chicago residents. Additionally, she is working on Health for All Library Partnership Programs to increase diversity in clinical trials. She hopes to continue her career in health disparities, medicine, and research in the future.

Health Equity Scholars Program

The Health Equity Scholars program is a volunteer opportunity that provides individuals with three to six months of substantive experience contributing to academic and professional learning around health inequities in Chicago. Scholars will have the opportunity to strengthen skills in research, analysis, collaboration, communication, and creative problem-solving to address complex social issues using intersectional approaches. Scholars will be paired with a CHET staff supervisor based on their area of interest and may work with a variety of Chicago-based organizations that influence health equity work. This program is open to the general public and those who are affiliated with Northwestern.

Health Equity Scholars



Sanjitha Boobalan

Sanjitha Boobalan is a Sophomore at Loyola University Chicago majoring in Molecular/Cellular Neuroscience. As a Health Equity Scholar, she worked on the OPTIMIZE Study that is testing a patient navigation intervention to improve perinatal care and reduce racial disparities in maternal health outcomes. Sanjitha assisted with recruitment of study participants and conducted patient interviews.



Cindy Chan, MPH

Cindy Chan, MPH provides support for the Chinatown Patient Navigation project and helped build a patient database for the OPTIMIZE trial. Cindy is also helping with building the Chinatown website and its educational materials and patient resources. She is currently a program manager in the research department at the Jesse Brown VA Medical Center.



Chisom Chima

Chisom Chima assisted in summer program planning for the ChicagoCHEC Summer Fellows Program and the ChicagoCHEC Community Report. Chisom graduated from Loyola University Chicago with a bachelor's degree in biology.



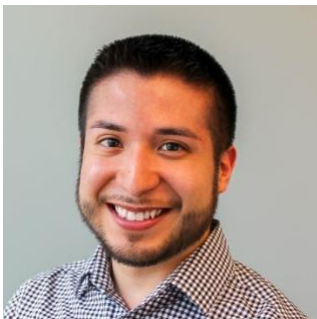
Sooin Choi

Sooin Choi is working on the Well-Mama Doula Project and Chinatown Patient Navigation program. Sooin received her BS in Neuroscience with a concentration in Social Class and Inequality from the University of Michigan.



Nicholas Martinez

Nicholas Martinez is a former fellow and Senior Fellow of the ChicagoCHEC program. He is currently working on a publication for Career911, a Massive Open Online Course. He is currently employed for the Town of Cicero Police Department.



Edgardo Ramirez

Edgardo Ramirez engaged in strategic planning and provided project support for an initial qualitative study with pregnant and postpartum BIPOC women. This is aimed at identifying barriers and facilitators to care, assessing experiences of racism and perceptions regarding support persons for WellMama Doula Project. He is currently pursuing a PhD in Clinical Psychology at UCLA and will be receiving his Master's degree at the end of 2022.



Khushal Shah,

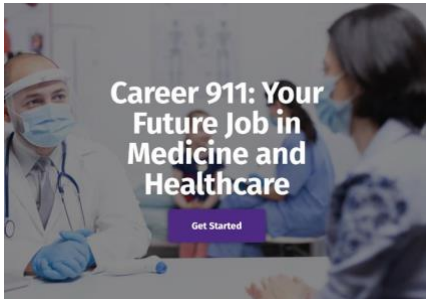
Khushal Shah provides professional development programming support to CHET's T37 Minority Health Training and Health Disparities Research Program and is currently working on health equity visualizations/maps and health policy-related manuscripts. Khushal received his BS in Bioengineering from UIC.



Jessica Xia

Jessica assisted in Project Safe Space with presentations and resources, she also helped with website maintenance for CHET and Chinatown Patient Navigation Program. She continues with her undergraduate studies in Neuroscience and Global Health at Northwestern University and will be graduating in 2023.

Career911: Your Future Job in Medicine – A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)



“Career911” is a free massive open online course (MOOC) focusing on health sciences and health care careers and workforce development. Since launching in April 2015 on the Coursera platform, more than 20,000 students from 160 countries have enrolled.

Skills covered in the course include: articulating a personal story, resume and cover letter writing, job search, interviewing, professional networking, and professional communications. Topics are packaged into video-based modules that are designed to allow students to learn at their own pace. Career911 was supported with funds from the Office of the Provost, the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center, and the National Cancer Institute. In the past year, we have converted the Coursera Career911 course content to a new website that provides streamlined access to videos and materials for students interested in exploring a career in medicine and healthcare. During Summer 2022, over 180 high school students from the Chicago area enrolled in the Lurie Children’s Discovering Healthcare Careers and One Summer Chicago participated in Career911 and earned their certificates. For more information visit <https://career911.org>.

Uterine Leiomyoma Research Center Lab Immersion Program

CHET’s Uterine Leiomyoma Research Center Lab Immersion Program provides paid laboratory internship experiences for BIPOC students interested in conducting uterine leiomyoma (fibroids) research. Uterine fibroids are the most common tumor affecting African Americans. They cause irregular uterine bleeding, anemia, and have led to over 200,000 hysterectomies annually in the United States. Interns will work on research projects that seek to understand the mechanisms responsible for the development and growth of uterine fibroids in order to reduce its morbidity. Find more information at our website:

<https://www.feinberg.northwestern.edu/sites/chet/education/lab-immersion.html>

Public Policy and Advocacy

Government institutions and health care systems were created to support the well-being and health of people, but racism and discrimination are deeply embedded in these systems. They are also plagued with complex levels of bureaucracy and politics that make it incredibly difficult to change policies, nonetheless at the speed necessary when a crisis emerges. While CHET's health equity research has the power to influence systemic change long-term, we also recognize that there are often disconnects that may result in academic research taking many years to inform public policy. CHET shares its expertise on multiple health equity issues with local, state, and federal policy leaders in real time to inform policy changes.



Project Safe Space

After founding the Abuse Prevention Workgroup of the Illinois Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Equity Team in May 2020, CHET sought and received funding from the Northwestern Memorial Foundation to launch Project Safe Space Chicago, which aims to develop and implement a training for health care providers across Northwestern Medicine on effective intimate partner violence (IPV) interventions in a telehealth context. This work was a direct response to the increase in IPV and other forms of abuse that resulted from the stay-at-home orders caused by the pandemic, which disproportionately affected Black womxn. While calls to the Illinois Domestic Violence Hotline spiked, many social services experienced cuts in funding due to the pandemic. Recognizing that health care visits (including telehealth) may be the only point of a potential intervention in some cases, Project Safe Space brings together community leaders from Apna Ghar, Connections for Abused Women and Children (CAWC), Mujeres Latinas en Acción, and YWCA Metropolitan Chicago to train health care providers in best practices for linking patients to IPV and other commonly needed resources and provides these organizations with emergency cash funds they can disburse to their clients to help them seek a safe space, such as a rideshare or temporary hotel stay.

Roe vs. Wade

CHET Director Dr. Melissa Simon provided expert analysis regarding the impact of the United States Supreme Court's reversal of Roe vs. Wade. In interviews with media outlets, Dr. Simon has emphasized that safe abortion care is an essential component of safe maternity care. Overturning this law would increase the already rising U.S. maternal mortality rates. Moreover, Dr. Simon continues to bring attention to the fact that women of color will bear the brunt of this decision, as decades of research show that the impact will fall hardest on those who already struggle to access health care.



**ADVANCING ASIAN AMERICAN
PACIFIC ISLANDER
LEADERSHIP IN HEALTH**

During the month of May, we celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and this year's theme is "Advancing Leaders Through Collaboration." The Center for Health Equity Transformation has partnered with multiple institutions to host a panel to discuss Asian Pacific American leadership in various healthcare settings.

Panelists:

 Victor Dzau, MD President, National Academy of Medicine	 Vivian Cheung, MD Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Professor of Neurology, Professor of Human Genetics, University of Michigan Medical School	 Thomas Lee, MD Chief Medical Officer, Press Ganey Associates	 Bei Wu, PhD Dean's Professor in Global Health, Vice Dean for Research, Rory Meyers College of Nursing, New York University
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Facilitator:

 Melissa Simon, MD, MPH Faculty Director, Center for Health Equity Transformation, Northwestern University	May 31, 2022 12-1 PM EST ONLINE VIA ZOOM	REGISTER NOW Link: https://bit.ly/APAleader
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Logos for National Academy of Medicine, Northwestern University, Rutgers, and NYU Meyers.

This event is supported, in part, by National Institutes of Health grants P30AG059304 and P30AG051266. The content is solely the responsibility of the speakers and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.

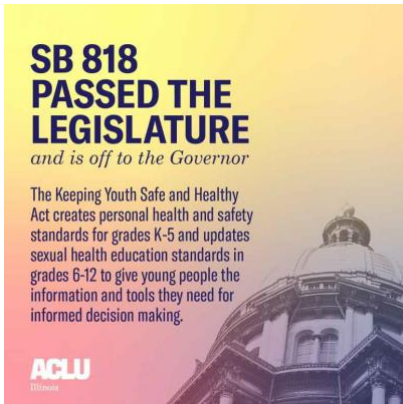
Advancing Asian American Pacific Islander Leadership in Health

During the month of May, CHET celebrated Asian Pacific American Heritage Month by partnering with multiple institutions to host a panel to discuss Asian Pacific American leadership in healthcare settings. Panelists included Victor Dzau, MD, MPH, President of the National Academy of Medicine; Vivian Cheung, MD, Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at University of Michigan Medical School; Thomas Lee, MD, Chief Medical Officer at Press Ganey Associates; and Bei Wu, PhD, Dean's Professor of Global Health and Vice Dean for Research at the Rory Meyers College of Nursing at New York University.



Women First Research Coalition

Dr. Simon serves as co-chair on the Women First Research Coalition that advocates for the research needed to address disparities in women’s health, including those related to maternal mortality, heart disease, and cancer.



Sponsored Bills

IL SB 818

CHET sponsored IL SB 818 – Keeping Youth Safe & Healthy Act, which aims to make sex education more inclusive and accessible across the State of Illinois. This CHET-sponsored bill was signed into law on August 2021

IL HB 354

CHET sponsored IL HB 354 - Medicaid Reimbursement for Doula and Home Visitors, which would expand the perinatal services covered under Medicaid and has the potential to transform maternal health outcomes.



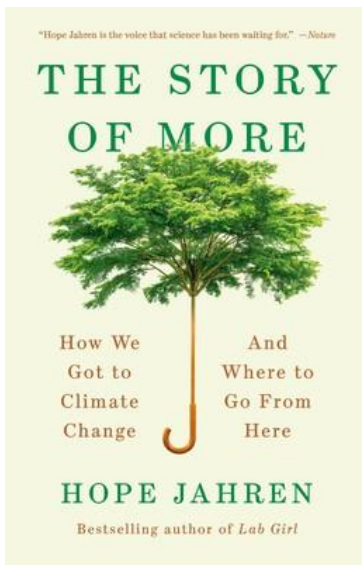
The Arts and Humanities in Health Equity

At the most basic level, art can improve health communication. Compelling visuals, designs, songs, etc. can be more memorable and sharable than statistics because they increase access and cultural relevance. Art can help disseminate health messages, shift public opinion, shape community discourse, or even motivate political will because it is widely recognized as a means for social change and awareness. These benefits generated by art are ideal for artists and health equity advocates who want to increase public education or look to elevate topics that are either taboo or require more attention. In the last year, CHET has hosted several events bridging health equity and the arts and humanities.



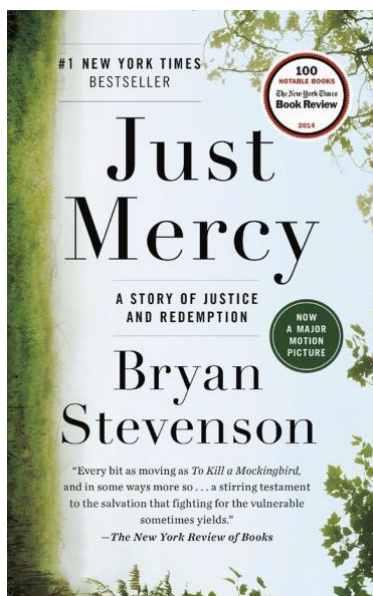
Juneteenth

CHET's 2022 Juneteenth event hosted two diverse voices featuring Sherman "Dilla" Thomas (TikTok Urban Historian) and Dr. Mary Pattillo - Harold Washington Professor of Sociology and African American Studies at Northwestern University. We celebrated the vibrant legacy of Black Chicago discussing different viewpoints of African American history and the lived experience of Black Chicagoans.



The Office of the President & One Book One Northwestern

The reading selection for 2021-2022 school year is *The Story of More: How We Got to Climate Change and Where to Go from Here* by Hope Jahren. CHET is part of the Steering Committee working with other NU students, faculty, and staff on environmental, sustainability, and equity/justice issues to bring campus-wide events & activities throughout the academic year. The book reminds us, as an individual and a society to "use less and share more" and to "take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts".



Just Mercy – One Book Northwestern – criminal justice-themed events

In collaboration with One Book One Northwestern, our Center explored the subject of criminal justice reform in relation to health and equity through a webinar series featuring leaders and researchers that work in the criminal justice field, such as Xavier McElrath-Bey from the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth. Another notable guest included Dr. Mary Patillo who discussed the impact of fines and fees in the criminal justice system.

Federal, State and Local Engagement

CHET recognizes that transformative change that can promote health equity will require changes to policies and systems that have historically oppressed people from marginalized populations. We embrace the American Public Health Association's (APHA) concept of Health in All Policies which recognizes that ALL policies have implications on health outcomes. CHET develops connections between researchers, communities, and policymakers that are currently operating in silos. To do this, we provide researchers and community members with opportunities to learn more about the advocacy and policymaking process, and educate policymakers on the academic and community resources available that can inform the policies they develop. Furthermore, we create spaces for all to interact so that opportunities to collaborate become more accessible.

National Academy of Medicine (NAM)

Dr. Simon was elected to the National Academy of Medicine in October 2021. The National Academy of Medicine (NAM) is one of three academies that make up the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (the National Academies) in the United States. Operating under the 1863 Congressional charter of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academies provide objective advice on matters of science, technology, and health.

Legislation

The CHET team is working with lawmakers, including Senator Dick Durbin and US Representatives Bill Foster and Lauren Underwood, to push for more stability of federal funding for scientific and biomedical research through sponsoring the bicameral American Cures Act and the American Innovation Act, intended to provide annual budget increases to federal agencies responsible for a significant part of America's research funding. Additionally, we are supporting the bipartisan MOMMA's Act, which extends coverage under Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to one year postpartum and provides additional support to States to address the maternal and infant mortality crisis. CHET is also supporting ongoing efforts to reform sex education laws in Illinois to ensure that sex education is LGBTQ+ inclusive and contains content aimed at preventing sexual abuse and violence.

United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)

Dr. Melissa Simon is a past member of the USPSTF, which works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications. Over five years on the USPSTF, Dr. Simon helped lead the efforts to address social determinants of health, person-centered language for gender inclusion, and racism in the USPSTF recommendations and in the recommendation making processes. Additionally, she serves on several activities through the National Academy of Medicine, including the Board of Population Health and Public Health Practice, and the Roundtable on the Promotion of Health Equity.

Advisory Committee on Research on Women's Health

As an advisor on this Advisory Committee at NIH, Dr. Simon works to give advice and make recommendations on priority issues affecting women's health and sex differences research.

CHET BY THE NUMBERS

\$34M+*

NIH Funding Since CHET's Founding

#1

NIH Funded Principal Investigator in OBGYN in the US**



6,477+*

Skinny Trees Podcast Plays



134+*

Manuscripts Published



207+*

Health Equity Scholars, CHEC Fellows, and T37 Trainees



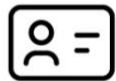
35+*

Community Partners Involved in Projects



82*

Northwestern Faculty Featured in Health Equity Footprint



30,000+*

Career911: Massive Open Online Course Learners



1,570+*

Voices Newsletter Subscribers



1,500+*

CHET Event Attendees



*Cumulative since CHET's Founding

**According to 2021 Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research Report

Acknowledgements



The Center for Health Equity Transformation is grateful for funding, and operational support provided by the Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Institute for Public Health and Medicine, with research program funding support provided by the National Cancer Institute (U54CA202995, U54CA202997, U54CA203000, P20CA233304, R01CA163830, U01CA274996); NIH Office of the NIH Director Common Fund (U54CA272163); National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (R01MD014068, R01MD016280, T37MD014248); National Library of Medicine (G08LM012688, G08LM013188, G08LM013188-02S1); National Institute on Aging (P30AG059304); National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease (1U01DK126045-01); Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (K12HD050121, P50HD098580); Merck Foundation; ECOG ACRIN; and Pritzker Foundation. The content of this report is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of CHET's sponsors.

Active Research Grants & Contracts 2021-2022

NURTURE: Northwestern University Recruitment to Transform Under-Representation and Achieve Equity

NIH U54CA272163 | 9/9/2022-8/31/2027

The Northwestern University Recruitment to Transform Under-Representation and achieve Equity (NURTURE) Program seeks to accelerate institutional culture change toward inclusive excellence through innovative institutional initiatives in hiring, mentoring, promotion and tenure, evaluation, and institutional accountability to ensure that all faculty can thrive. NURTURE features cluster hiring of a cohort of 15 new early-career faculty in three scientific neighborhoods: Cancer; Cardiovascular; and Brain, Mind and Behavior — unified by a cross cutting theme of “Cells to Community.” NURTURE is a collaborative initiative among Northwestern University’s Feinberg School of Medicine, McCormick School of Engineering, and Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences. NURTURE is supported by an NIH award to Northwestern University through the Office of Strategic Coordination/Office of the NIH Director as part of the NIH Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) Program. CHET Director’s Role: Multiple Principal Investigator

The Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC) NIH U54CA203000; CA2022995; CA2022997 | 9/1/2015-9/30/2025

The Chicago Cancer Health Equity Collaborative (ChicagoCHEC) - This collaborative will accomplish the following objectives: 1) cross-fertilize research among NEIU and UIC faculty and students with RHLCCC-NU across the cancer continuum, from prevention to survivorship; 2) enhance RHLCCC-NU, UIC and NEIU collaborative research efforts and networking opportunities through cross-sponsored conferences, symposia, and research education opportunities; 3) advance team-based research projects that will generate a steady pipeline of students, fellows and faculty that continue in advanced studies; 4) embed innovative experience-learning curricular modifications to expose students to cancer disparities research; and 5) develop scientists who will produce more competitive grant applications and succeed in securing funding. To support our achievement of these objectives in this U54, we have 4 Cores, a ChicagoCHEC Research Fellows Program and we seed research projects annually. CHET Director’s Role: Multiple Principal Investigator

Northwestern University Cancer Health Equity Research SPORE (NU-CHERS)

P20 NIH NCI P20CA233304 | 9/15/2020-8/30/2023

The Northwestern University Cancer Health Equity Research SPORE (NU-CHERS) - Centered in Chicago, one of the most diverse cities in the United States, this P20 feasibility and planning proposal to develop the Northwestern University Cancer Health Equity Research SPORE (NU-CHERS) will generate scientific findings and establish sustainable, collaborative, academic and community infrastructure that will serve as the foundation for a comprehensive translational cancer research program focused on cancer health disparities. In this proposal, we set our initial translational research focus to gynecologic cancers, including disparities in endometrial and cervical cancer incidence, early detection, and mortality as experienced by African American women. CHET Director’s Role: Principal Investigator



The ECOG-ACRIN SUPPORT Trial: Multilevel Intervention to Improve Diverse Enrollment in Cancer Clinical Trials

NIH NCI U01CA274996 | 9/15/2022-8/31/2027

In partnership with ECOG-ACRIN (EA), this study will develop and evaluate an ECOG-ACRIN Trial SUPPORT Toolkit (SUPPORT intervention) that aims to improve Black and Latino referral and enrollment in active NCI-supported therapeutic trials in head and neck, thoracic, and genitourinary cancers, and leukemia and myeloma. The multilevel EA SUPPORT intervention consists of a CT research literacy tool and CT Resource Navigators based at EA who will interface with patients, providers, and community oncology site staff to improve referral and enrollment of Black and Latino patients to CTs. CHET Director's Role: Multiple Principal Investigator

Optimizing Patient Navigation for Perinatal Care

NIH NIMHD R01MD014068 | 08/01/2019-07/31/2024

The Optimize Study: Optimizing Patient Navigation for Perinatal Care - Persistent racial/ethnic disparities in perinatal outcomes are urgent public health concerns, especially for African American women in the U.S. This Hybrid Type 2 randomized cluster trial of 20 community health centers will study the effectiveness of patient navigation and its implementation among African American pregnant and postpartum women. Role: Principal Investigator

Patient Navigation 2.0: Addressing the Challenge of Scaling Navigation through Checklist-based Implementation

NIH NCI R01CA163830 | 3/15/2012-2/28/2024

The objectives of this study are to use, disseminate and implement the well-tested patient navigation model to the full continuum of breast and cervical cancer screening through survivorship among Chinese women in Chicago's Chinatown community. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator

Enhancing Perinatal Care Support to Improve Maternal Mortality Disparities

NIH 1R01MD016280-01A1 | 08/24/2021 – 04/30/2026

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) women experience profound maternal health disparities in the US, including rising rates of maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity. This study will develop a Well- Mama intervention for pregnant and postpartum BIPOC women, centered around Community Doula Navigators conducting in-person and telehealth check-ins on 5 priority areas (mental health, cardiovascular symptoms, safety, opioid/substance abuse, and social support), supplemented with virtual support groups and labor support. We will conduct a randomized trial in Chicago IL, Newark NJ, and Baton Rouge LA to test whether the Well- Mama intervention increases BIPOC women's receipt of prenatal and postpartum care. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator

Reducing Disparities in Urinary Control Symptoms for Minority Women

NIH NIDDK 1R01DK129849-01 | 09/20/2021 – 08/31/2025

Given barriers to accessing physical therapy and the behavioral and mental health impacts of urinary incontinence, this project will evaluate the feasibility and efficacy of a culturally specific, home-based, online, community health-worker supported, conservative intervention for urinary incontinence. We hypothesize that improvement in urinary incontinence symptoms of women receiving SUPPORT therapy will be non-inferior to those receiving the gold-standard treatment of in-person physical therapy and will lead to improved mental health. CHET Director's Role: Multiple Principal Investigator



**Northwestern University Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Training
NIH NIMHD T37MD01428 | 07/18/2019-02/29/2024**

The NU-MHRT builds on the collective strength, expertise, and experience of investigators and faculty and proposes innovative training approaches, including, assembling a transdisciplinary team of NIH-funded program faculty; building a cohort of trainees across career stages from undergraduate through postdoctoral; strengthening the pipeline of disparity trainees by reaching out to community college students and planting the seeds of careers in health sciences research; and partnering with minority serving institutions to enhance research training opportunities for their students and strengthen research mentorship skills among their faculty. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator

Advancing Library-Academic Medical Center Partnerships to Navigate Wellness and Scale Preventive Services Access

NIH NLM G08LM013188 | 09/19/2019-5/31/2022

This library-academic health center partnership aims to develop a digital tool for librarians and library patrons to navigate wellness and help augment the USPSTF information to enhance the accessibility of up-to-date and tailored, preventive screening and wellness information to underserved populations. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator

Northwestern University PLUS Clinical Trial Site

NIH NIDDK U01DK126045 | 7/1/2020-6/30/2025

This site is a part of the PLUS Clinical Trial aiming to improve preventive health approaches to bladder and overall lower urinary tract health. CHET Director's Role: Multiple Principal Investigator (with Kenton and Griffith)

Chicago Asian Resource Center for Minority Aging Research

NIH NIA P30AG059304 | 09/01/2018-08/31/2023

The RCMAR Center in conjunction with the Research Education and Training Core will provide an enriched environment that develops Scholars who: 1) understand the biological, social-cultural, psychological, and behavioral sciences with a specific emphasis on knowledge about mechanisms of action underlying trauma and related outcomes at the individual or population level, focusing on Asian elders; and 2) can conduct innovative pilot research that forms the basis for future minority aging research, ultimately designed to improve the lives of older persons. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator of Research Education and Training Core

Women's Reproductive Health Research (WRHR-K12)

Career Development Award Program

NIH NICHD HD050121 Bulun (PI) | 7/1/2006-6/30/2025

The major goals of the WRHR program are to develop the careers of physician scientists in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology. CHET Director's Role: Program Director

NCTRI Northwestern Leiomyoma Research Center

NIH P50HD098580 Bulun (PI) | 4/1/2019-3/31/2024

The major goals of the Leiomyoma Research Center is to understand novel clinically relevant mechanisms responsible for pathogenesis and growth of uterine leiomyomas especially in African American women to reduce associated morbidity in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology. CHET Director's Role: Research Education and Outreach Core Director

Epigenomic Biomarkers of HIV-Associated Cancers in Nigeria: Epigenomic Biomarkers of HIV-Associated Cervical Cancer

NIH U54CA221205 | 8/1/2017-7/31/2022

Nigerian women face one of the worst prognosis in the world when diagnosed with cervical cancer, and this prognosis worsens with HIV infection. This work aims to elucidate the epigenetic biomarkers in HIV associated cervical cancer. Identification of epigenetic markers predicting progression will also provide opportunities for developing future therapeutic targets for the management of cervical dysplasia and cancer. CHET Director's Role: Project Principal Investigator: Epigenomics of Cervical Cancer in HIV infected women

Leveraging the Learning Health System to Improve Abnormal Cancer Screen Follow- Up in Community Health Center

Merck Foundation | 1/1/2017-12/30/2022

This grant proposes a multilevel intervention to improve abnormal cancer screening diagnostic resolution for low-income patients at community health centers. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator

The Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center

NCI P30CA060553 (Platanias PI) | 09/16/13 - 07/31/23

The goals of this Cancer Center Support Grant are to conduct and support cancer research and to integrate cancer-related research throughout the university; to coordinate and integrate cancer-related activities of the University including community outreach initiatives; to develop and conduct cancer education programs; to promote and participate in state-of-the-are care of cancer patients at the affiliated hospitals of the McGaw Medical Center of Northwestern University and; to develop and implement the initiatives in cancer prevention and control research. These goals are accomplished through the activities of the 9 established programs and 15 shared resources. CHET Director's Role: Co-Program Leader, Cancer Control and Survivorship and Co-Director of Community Outreach and Catchment

ECOG ACRIN NCORP Research Base

NCI NCORP 1UG1CA189828-01 (Schnell and Wagner mPI) | 8/1/2014-7/31/2025

The ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group (EA) is dedicated to decreasing the burden of cancer. EA is a vibrant member of the National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN) and the NCI Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP), focused on practice-changing clinical and translational research across the cancer care continuum from prevention and early detection, through the management of advanced disease and its impact. CHET Director's Role: Health Equity Core/Committee Chair and Co-Investigator

Improving Low Income Women's Health Care at Community Health Centers

Pritzker Foundation | 9/1/2016-8/31/2022

With our well-established community engaged research partnership, we will implement an intervention 4R Care Delivery Model (4R = Right information and Right Treatment to the Right Patient at the Right Time), which was developed to identify and address gaps in community nested comprehensive cancer care in 3 large community health centers with a strong footprint in low income, minority communities across Chicago. CHET Director's Role: Principal Investigator



“Trailblazers are not afraid to ask the hard questions. They are not afraid to push boundaries when it is clear that some individuals or populations are being left behind or not being heard or are being harmed. Trailblazers are not afraid to fail while trying to do better, because learning from failure is part of the process. Indeed, we all can do better.”

– Melissa Simon, MD, MPH