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HORIZON Center: Promoting Health and Health Equity in Inner Boston

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HORIZON Center: Promoting Health and Health Equity in Inner Boston

Celia L. Moore, Center Director; Jane Adams, Research Core; Tiffany Donaldson, Training Core; & Ester Shapiro, Community Engagement Core, UMass Boston Dept. of Psychology; Eileen-Stuart Shor, Project Director, UMass Boston Dept. of Nursing; Jessica Whiteley, Project Director, UMass Boston Dept. of Exercise and Health Sciences. Community Research Advisory Board (CRAB), Milton Samuels, Chair; Michelle Rogers, Co-Chair; 13 additional members. Cherishing our Hearts and Souls Coalition (COHS), over 120 individuals and agencies representing Roxbury and surround.

Summary/Abstract

The HORIZON Center is an Exploratory Center of Excellence (COE) funded by a grant from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). Our mission is to improve minority health and promote health equity through research, research training, and community engagement. Like other COEs, HORIZON is organized into four core areas: research, research training, community engagement, and administration. However, we work to promote collaboration and integration across core areas. This poster presents a sample of community engagement activities throughout the Center.

Goals and Objectives

OVERARCHING CENTER GOALS ARE TO:

- Conduct research on health disparities in partnership with the community as represented by COHS and CRAB
- Offer research training, with an emphasis on CBPR*, to faculty, students, and community stakeholders.
- Build a sustainable neighborhood-based infrastructure within COHS and CRAB that partners with UMass Boston and other academic institutions to research and implement best practices in reducing health disparities, CBPR, community engagement and academic-community partnerships.

SPECIFIC AIMS OF CENTER REGARDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INCLUDE:

- Provide organizational support to foster new and nurture established relationships.
- Translate research activities and findings into materials for training, information exchange, and dissemination.
- Increase CBPR capacity of community partners by involving CRAB in research training.
- Pursue next step funding with CRAB and its community affiliates.
- Determine current and best practices for community advisory boards (the CAB study)
- Determine most effective recruitment strategies for generating and sustaining a cohort of residents from an urban, impoverished neighborhood who are willing to participate in research (the CARE project).
- Engage COHS and CRAB in a process to identify major health disparity issues of research interest to Roxbury as prelude to new CBPR studies.

*CBPR: Community Based Participatory Research

Results/Impacts

A sample of results.



Jessica Whiteley's iTeen project provided outreach and information at a COHS health fair.



Boys from Holmes Elementary school spend a day on campus at the end of a social mentoring program to increase interest in school. This ongoing project, led by Center postdoc Jesse Tauriac, is a collaboration with the school and DotWell.



Community members complete a survey on health disparities at an organizational and planning meeting with COHS.



Ester Shapiro, pictured to right at a community event, completed the CAB and CARE community engagement projects. The projects addressed best practices in academic-community partnerships and provided information to community members about health research.

Approaches and Methods

Center members conduct behavioral and biomedical research at all levels, from basic through all translational stages. The primary focus is on translational research in partnership with the local community, conducted within a CBPR framework.

Research projects address health disparities of significance to the community. We define community both geographically and ethnically. COHS and CRAB began with the African-American community in Roxbury and has expanded to include Dorchester, Mattapan, and Hyde Park.

Center activities include community outreach and engagement in addition to research. We use evidence-based approaches and seek to evaluate all activities.

Information dissemination occurs with multiple audiences and venues: traditional publications, regular meetings with partners, electronic media, neighborhood events including health fairs, workshops, and forums.

Conclusion/Next Steps

CRAB (pictured to right) is in the process of incorporating as a 501(c)3 organization. Working in affiliation with members of COHS and academic institutions, it proposes to become a self-sustaining community entity to address health disparities in Roxbury and surround. This collaborative effort is led by Dr. Chris Thompson, Executive Director of Quincy/Geneva Housing Corp. and member of CRAB and COHS.



Center investigators are using the results of their projects to ask new research questions and to disseminate findings. The following presents a sampling. Tiffany Donaldson (second clockwise from lower left) is completing laboratory research with translational implications for substance abuse vulnerability. Jessica Whiteley (center rear) is completing the iTeen project, a major research project on promoting healthy diet and exercise among adolescent girls at risk for ohealth disparities. Eileen Stuart-Shor (front left) is disseminating findings from her *Heart and Sole* project in collaboration with the Reggie Lewis Center in Roxbury, and has extended her local work to a project in Kenya.

References and Resources

HORIZON maintains a [website](#) to describe its activities, publications, and other products.

Community resources supported by the Center include CRAB, with members trained to serve as community members of IRB boards and to consult, advise, and consent on academic research projects conducted in the community. CRAB, working in affiliation with members of the COHS coalition, is also available to develop new research projects with academic partners.

Additional Partnerships, Interests, Information and/or Contacts

The HORIZON Center is an Exploratory Center of Excellence funded by 5P20MD002290 from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD). HORIZON was founded in 2007, through an initial partnership with the Program to Eliminate Health Disparities at the Harvard School of Public Health (Deborah Prothrow-Stith and Brian Gibbs, lead HSPH faculty). The UMass Boston Dept. of Psychology, College of Liberal Arts, serves as institutional home of this interdisciplinary initiative. The Community Research Advisory Board and the Cherishing our Hearts and Souls Coalition are major community partners in the Center. Project-specific partners include DotWell, the Dorchester Family School Initiative, the Holmes Elementary School, the Reggie Lewis Center, and the Science Museum. See the [HORIZON website](#) for contact information: <http://horizon.umb.edu/index.php>