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A partnership to address cancer disparities

NEWSLETTER**Research & Scholar Breakthroughs**

Fall | Issue 1 | 2018

The UHAND Program is a long-term, collaborative partnership between the University of Houston and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center that supports and stimulates excellence in educational programming and innovation in research designed to affect health equity among racial/ethnic groups disproportionately affected by cancer disparities.

Kick-Off

On August 6, 2018 the UHAND program kicked off our new partnership to address cancer disparities among black and Hispanics at an evening reception which brought together over 85 people including leaders from both institutions, as well as faculty, students, and local community members. The event celebrated the launch of the four-year grant from the National Cancer Institute, which focuses on training minority and underrepresented students from the University of Houston to address cancer disparities, stimulating innovative collaborative research between faculty at our institutions and providing educational and outreach activities to the Third Ward and East End communities.

Thank you to everyone who was able to join us for this exciting event!



From left to right: Dr. Renu Khator, Dr. Lorraine Reitzel, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Dr. Lorna Haughton McNeill, and Dr. Peter Pisters.

Education: Our Scholars

We are proud to have one postdoctoral fellow, three doctoral students, and five undergraduate students participating as **UHAND scholars**. Our scholars are matched with experts in the field of cancer disparities that align with their research interests. Our scholars are active in the labs of our hand selected mentors and are paired with community agencies to ensure that their academic learning experience is enriched with experiences that directly relate to the communities we aim to serve with our research.



UHAND Scholars



Krystal Christopher
 Doctoral Student
 Psychological, Health & Learning Sciences
 Mentor: Dr. Ezemenari Obasi
 Organization: Reconstruction of a Survivor



Basant Gamal
 Undergraduate
 Biochemical/Biophysical Sciences
 Mentor: Dr. Tracey A. Ledoux
 Organization: The Rose



Sean Reuven
 Undergraduate
 Health Education
 Mentor: Dr. Lorna H. McNeill
 Organization: San Jose Clinic



Shreya Desai
 Undergraduate
 Biology & Psychology
 Mentor: Dr. Rosenda Murillo
 Organization: Susan G. Komen



Paulina Linares
 Undergraduate
 Psychology
 Mentor: Dr. Jason. D Robinson
 Organization: FLAS



Christine Smith
 Undergraduate
 Public Health
 Mentor: Dr. Ezemenari Obasi
 Organization: Change Happens!



Sahar Eshtehardi
 Doctoral Student
 Psychological, Health & Learning Sciences
 Mentor: Dr. Joya Chandra
 Organization: Brighter Bites



Chisom Odoh
 Postdoctoral Fellow
 Psychological, Health, & Learning Sciences
 Mentor: Dr. Lorraine Reitzel



Ashley Taylor
 Doctoral Student
 Psychological, Health & Learning Sciences
 Mentor: Dr. Tracey A. Ledoux
 Organization: Recipe for Success



Left to right: PI Dr. Lorna Haughton McNeill, PI Dr. Lorraine R. Reitzel and Dr. Kayce Solari Williams

Research: Our Pilot Projects & Supplements

The UHAND program provides mentorship to early stage investigators (ESIs) from the University of Houston and MD Anderson who have expertise in cancer disparity related research and are interested in learning more about health disparities and community-engaged research.

We have funded one pilot project at the University of Houston and one at MD Anderson.



1. Dr. Daphne Hernandez is working with Dr. Hua Zao on her pilot project **“Mexican Immigrants’ Biological and Behavioral Cancer Risk Based on Stress”** project, which enrolled 50 Mexican immigrants (ages

2. Dr. Dalnim Cho is working with Dr. Richard Simpson to engage 40 dyads of **African American and Hispanic prostate cancer survivors on active surveillance and their partners** in a 6-month, remotely delivered

19-49) residing in the Houston-area to better understand how repeated or chronic stress of adverse childhood experiences, such as living in poverty, or ongoing adult experiences associated with minority stress, such as pressure to acculturate, can lead to dysregulation of biological systems and harmful health behaviors that ultimately increase cancer risk.

lifestyle intervention. The primary aim of this project is to determine the feasibility of recruiting and retaining dyads, as well as implementing a lifestyle intervention during this period of prostate cancer survivorship. The secondary aims are to: 1) evaluate the preliminary efficacy of an active surveillance lifestyle intervention in improving diet, physical activity, quality of life, and inflammation at the end of the study; and 2) conduct a process evaluation of the active surveillance lifestyle intervention.

We have also been awarded two administrative supplements for each of our pilot projects



The Role of Perceptions & Barriers to Physical Activity in Cancer Risk Among Mexican Immigrants

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3. Dr. Rosie Murillo will be working with Drs. Hernandez, Reitzel, McNeill, and Lu to supplement the UHAND Pilot Project **“Mexican Immigrants’ Biological and Behavioral Cancer Risk Based on Stress”** by adding an examination of perception and barriers related to physical activity experienced in childhood and adulthood as a modifiable cancer risk factor in adulthood among Mexican immigrants.



Watchful Living: A lifestyle intervention for African American & Hispanic prostate cancer patients on active surveillance & their partners

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4. Dr. Melissa Markofski will be working with Drs. Cho, McNeill, Basen-Engquist, and Simpson to supplement the UHAND Pilot Project **“Watchful Living: A lifestyle intervention for African American and Hispanic prostate cancer patients on active surveillance and their partners”** by building upon the parent grant to evaluate the efficacy of the intervention in improving physical fitness and muscular strength.

UHAND in the News

- [MD Anderson and UH Partner to Tackle Cancer Health Disparities](#)
- [Collaboration aims to curb cancer in Houston's black and Hispanic communities](#)

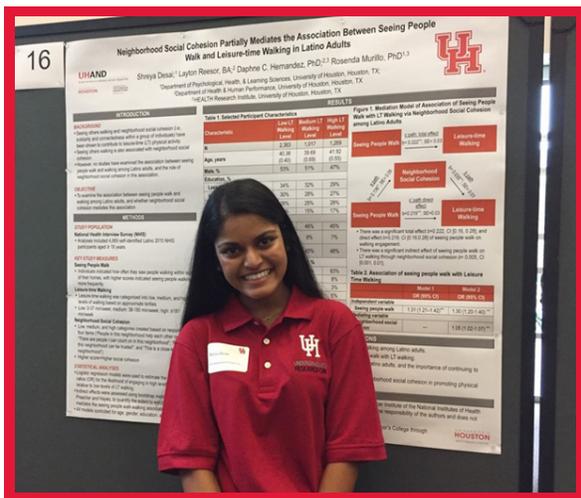
Recent UHAND Publications & Presentations

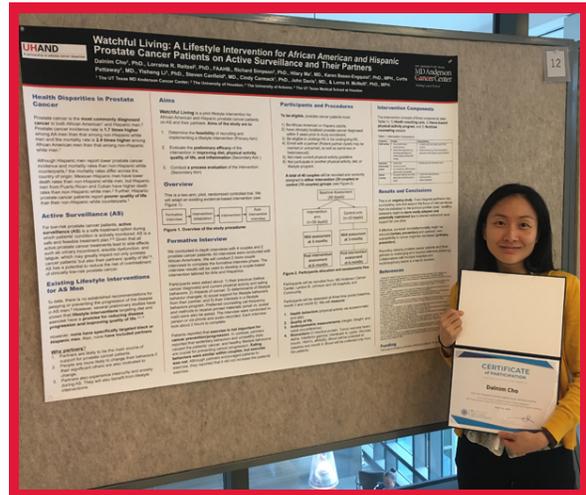
Neisler, J., (joint first author) Shree, S., (joint first author) Reitzel, L. R., Chen, T.A., Kendzor, D. E., Obasi, E. M., Wrighting, Q., & Businelle, M. S. (2019). Characterizing alcohol use behaviors among homeless men and women. *American Journal of Health Behavior, 43*, 37-49.

Hernandez, D.C., Reesor, L., Murillo, R. (2018). *C-reactive protein moderates the food insecurity-obesity paradox among women*. Poster presented at the American Academy of Health Behavior Scientific Meeting in Portland, Oregon.

Neisler, J., Reitzel, L. R., Garey, L., Kendzor, D. E., Hebert, E. T., Vijayaraghavan, M., & Businelle, M. S. (2018). The moderating effect of perceived social support on the relation between heaviness of smoking and quit attempts among adult homeless smokers. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence, 190*, 128-132.

Cho, D., Reitzel, L. R., Simpson, R., Ma, H., Basen-Engquist, K., Pettaway, C., Li, Y., Canfield, S., Carmack, C., Davis, J., McNeill, L.H. (2018). *Watchful Living: A pilot lifestyle intervention for African American and Hispanic prostate cancer patients on active surveillance and their partners*. Poster presented at the CRCHD Partnership to Advance Cancer Health Equity (PACHE) Program Meeting in Rockville, Maryland.





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