

*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.*

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## UHAND General Updates

[Dr. Chisom Odoh](#) (former UHAND postdoctoral fellow) completed the UHAND program in July and is currently a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Department of Rehabilitation and Health Services at the [University of North Texas](#). [Christine Smith](#) (former UHAND Scholar) also completed the program and is currently working at [Change Happens!](#) as a Health Educator for the [HYPE 3.0 program](#) – a teen pregnancy prevention program. Change Happens! is a community-based non-profit in Houston's [Third Ward](#) that provides programs and services to “empower people to help themselves.”

In August, UHAND met with its [External Advisory Board](#) (EAB) to share program progress with stakeholders. The meeting featured the in-person attendance of 6 EAB members and select UHAND Scholars who shared their experience working with the program; [Dr. Nicole McNeil Ford](#) (Program Officer from the [National Cancer Institute Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities](#)) also attended remotely.

Additionally, our UHAND website now includes a [Spanish landing page](#) that summarizes our program and contains downloadable health brochures.



From left to right: Ashley Taylor (UHAND graduate Scholar), Sahar Eshtehardi (UHAND graduate Scholar), Dr. Amelie Ramirez (EAB member), Dr. Melicia Whitt-Glover (EAB member), Dr. Kenneth Resnicow (EAB chair), Shreya Desai (UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Dr. Monica Baskin (EAB member), Dr. Christine Sheffer (EAB member), Dr. Melissa Markofski (UHAND Early Stage Investigator), Dr. Dalnim Cho (UHAND Early Stage Investigator) at the annual EAB meeting.

## **SCHOLAR APPLICATIONS OPEN**

The UHAND program is currently accepting applications for the 2020 year! To learn more, please visit the [UHAND website](#).

## **Our Scholars**

### **Scholar Achievements**

[Shreya Desai](#) (UHAND undergraduate Scholar) and [Dr. Rosenda Murillo](#) (UHAND Early Stage Investigator) presented their research at the [12th American Association for Cancer Research \(AACR\) Conference](#) for which Shreya was awarded the [Geographic Management of Cancer Health Disparities Program \(GMaP\) Region 3 Travel Funds Award](#). [Dr. Daphne Hernandez](#) (UHAND Pilot Investigator) also had her research presented at the AACR Conference. [Dr. Lorna McNeill](#) (MD Anderson Principal Investigator) and [Dr. Dalnim Cho](#) (UHAND Early Stage Investigator) were in attendance as well. [Ashley Taylor](#) (UHAND graduate Scholar) with the support of her academic mentor, [Dr. Lorraine Reitzel](#) (University of Houston Principal Investigator), recently published her article "[Physical Activity and Sleep Problems in Homeless Adults](#)" in the journal [PLOS ONE](#), which led to her feature in a [news article](#) written by the [University of Houston College of Education](#).

In August, [Krystal Christopher](#) (UHAND graduate Scholar) with the support of her mentor, [Dr. Ezemenari Obasi](#), presented her research "Basal Cortisol Diurnal Trajectories of African

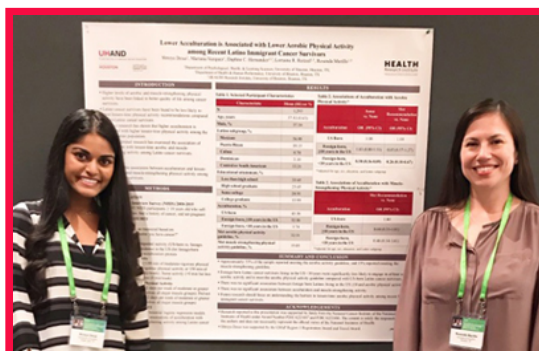
American Populations in an Urban Setting” and “Cortisol Awakening Response, Stress, and Neighborhood Violence among African Americans” at the [American Psychological Association 2019 Convention](#) in Chicago, IL.

[Sahar Eshtehardi](#) (UHAND graduate Scholar) with the support of her mentor, [Dr. Joya Chandra](#), presented her summer research with the [Cancer Prevention Research Training Program Summer Research Experience](#) at the [Summer Trainee Exposition](#) as well as the [Poster Session and Elevator Speech Competition](#). In October, Sahar was invited to sit on a panel for the [University of Houston Career Services](#) where she shared her graduate school journey with other University of Houston students. Sahar also was recently accepted to serve in the [Journal of Pediatric Psychology Student Journal Club](#) for the 2019-2020 year! Through this program, Sahar will critically evaluate articles through written commentary.

In September, our Scholars had the opportunity to go bowling and spend time with each other and with the Education Program co-directors, [Dr. Kayce Solari Williams](#) (University of Houston) and [Dr. Shine Chang](#) (MD Anderson).



*Sahar Eshtehardi (UHAND graduate Scholar) presents her research at the Summer Trainee Exposition.*



*Shreya Desai (L) pictured with her mentor, Dr. Rosenda Murillo (R), at the 12th Annual AACR Conference in San Francisco, CA.*



*From left to right: Christine Smith (UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (UHAND Education Program co-director), Paulina Linares Abrego (UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Krystal Christopher (UHAND graduate Scholar), Sean Reuven (UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Dr. Shine Chang (UHAND Education Program co-director) at the University of Houston Student Center Games Room.*

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## **Education**

We kicked off the fall semester of the UHAND-Komen Cancer Disparities Seminar with a talk from [Dr. Ruth Rechis-Oelker](#) (Director of the [Be Well Communities](#) program) and [Ms. Ayo Ogunye](#) (University of Houston Alumni Career Counselor). During this quarter, we also continued with the [Professional Development Series](#) attended by [UHAND Early Stage Investigators](#) and [HEALTH Research Institute](#) affiliates. [Dr. Courtney Holladay](#) spoke to attendees in August on “Building Leadership Capabilities.” In October, [Ms. Kelly McCormick](#) spoke on “Networking Strategies and Building an External Reputation.”

In July, [Dr. Miria Kano](#), Regional Coordinating Director for GMaP Region 3, shared information about GMaP resources available to UHAND Scholars, Early Stage Investigators, and researchers.

In October, UHAND also helped pilot the *Mechanisms of Exercise in Cancer and Health* seminar hosted by [Dr. Emily Lavoy](#), [Dr. Melissa Markofski](#) (UHAND Early Stage Investigator), and [Dr. Keri Schadler](#) for [University of Houston](#) and [MD Anderson](#) students and trainees. The purpose of this seminar series is to share ongoing research between University of Houston and MD Anderson research groups that have common interests in exercise and cancer survivorship.

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## **Community**

In September, the [Center for Community-Engaged Translational Research](#), led by Dr. Lorna McNeill (MD Anderson Principal Investigator), hosted an inaugural conference focused on African Americans and faith-based organizations titled “[Eyes Have Not Seen, Ears Have Not Heard: Breakthroughs in Cancer Research](#).” The conference brought together over 200 church leaders, congregants, health professionals, and cancer experts from across the country to address cancer health disparities in African American communities. UHAND undergraduate Scholars ([Sara Flores](#), Shreya Desai, and [Basant Gamal](#)) assisted with the UHAND exhibit table. During the conference, [Dr. Shahnjayla Connors](#) (UHAND affiliate) presented her breast cancer reconstruction disparities research conducted with Dr. Lorraine Reitzel (University of Houston Principal Investigator).

In October, Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (UHAND Education Program co-director) was on a Health Q&A panel for the [University of Houston Health Students Association](#) where she discussed cancer disparities and how the UHAND program works to address it.

Sara Flores (UHAND undergraduate Scholar) has been working in the community as part of the [Active Living After Cancer](#) (ALAC) program, a project led by her research mentor, [Dr.](#)



Karen Basen-Engquist, that aims to improve cancer survivors' quality of life by promoting physical activity and providing navigation services related to survivorship. Sara recently conducted informal interviews of community members in the ALAC program. Of the experience, Sara noted, "It was incredible to see the positive impact this program has had on their lives. It reaffirmed my passion for this field of work."



*Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (UHAND Education Program co-director, center) pictured with student members of the University of Houston Health Students Association.*



*From left to right: Dr. Lorna McNeill (MD Anderson Principal Investigator), Sara Flores (UHAND undergraduate Scholar), Shreya Desai (UHAND undergraduate scholar), and Basant Gamal (UHAND undergraduate Scholar) at the Church Health Conference.*



*UHAND undergraduate Scholars, Sara Flores (L) and Basant Gamal (R), shown representing UHAND at the Church Health Conference.*

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## Research

Dr. Lorraine Reitzel and Dr. Daphne Hernandez recently published a paper titled "Advancing Health Behavior Research and Scholarship through Mentorship of First Generation, Underrepresented Undergraduate Students." The paper provides insight on their perspectives regarding mentorship of undergraduate mentees at the University of Houston, one of the most ethnically diverse national universities.

In September, Dr. Shine Chang and Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (UHAND Education Program co-directors) presented a poster on "Innovation in Learning: Recruiting and Preparing the Next

Generation of Scientist-Advocates in Cancer Health Disparities” at the [2019 International Cancer Education Conference](#) (ICEC) in Salt Lake City, Utah.



*UHAND Education Program co-directors, Dr. Kayce Solari Williams (L) and Dr. Shine Chang (R), present their research poster at the 2019 ICEC Conference.*

### PILOT 3 ANNOUNCEMENT

UHAND Principal Investigators, Dr. Lorraine Reitzel and Dr. Lorna McNeill, have worked with [MD Anderson's Duncan Family Institute](#) (DFI) to review applications for the UHAND Program's third pilot project. This third pilot is a collaboration between UHAND and the DFI to provide a combined \$100,000 seed funding opportunity.

After careful review, we are excited to announce that [Dr. Guang Peng](#) (Associate Professor at MD Anderson) and [Dr. Xinli Liu](#) (Associate Professor at the University of Houston) will be leading our third pilot: "[Novel Formulation of Synthetic Retinoid for Chemoprevention](#)." This study seeks to address the greater incidence and death rates due to breast cancer in African American women. One factor contributing to these disparate rates is that African American women have a higher prevalence of developing triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC), a type of breast cancer for which there currently lacks preventive therapy options. Consequently, Dr. Peng and Dr. Liu's project will test the efficacy of a topical preventive therapy for TNBC, which would help address breast cancer disparities in high-risk African American women.

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## UHAND Recognition

Congratulations to Dr. Shine Chang, UHAND Education Program co-director, who recently received the President's Award from MD Anderson in recognition of her work in advancing excellence in education and training!

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## Select UHAND Publications

**Hernandez, D. C.**, (joint first author), **Reitzel, L. R.** (joint first author), & Leal, I. M. (in press). Advancing Health Behavior Research and Scholarship Through Mentorship of First Generation, Underrepresented Undergraduate Students. *Health Behavior Research*.

**Murillo, R.**, Pirzada, A., Wu, D., Gallo, L.C., Davis, S., Ostrovsky, N.W., Penedo, F.J., Perreira, K.M., Reina, S.A., Van Horn, L., Stamler, J., Daviglius, M.L. (in press). The Association Between Family Social Network Size and Healthy Lifestyle Factors: Results from the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL). *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*.

**Murillo, R.**, Ayalew, L., **Hernandez, D. C.** (in press). The Association Between Neighborhood Social Cohesion and Sleep Duration in Latinos. *Ethnicity & Health*.

**Obasi, E. M.**, Chen, T-A., Cavanagh, L., Smith, B. K., Wilborn, K. A., **McNeill, L. H.**, & **Reitzel, L. R.** (in press). Depression, Perceived Social Control, and Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal Axis Function in African-American Adults. *Health Psychology*.

For the full list of UHAND-supported publications and presentations, please visit <https://www.uhandpartnership.com/publications>.



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# UHAND

A partnership to address cancer disparities

UNIVERSITY of  
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