Excellence in Partnerships

A partnership of SUNY Downstate Medical Center, the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health and the Office of the Brooklyn Borough President

Working for the Community. Working with the Community.

In This Issue

Community Outreach 2
Progress Report
Summer Institute 2
Program to Increase Diversity (SIPID)
Community Advisory Board 4
Community Spotlights: 3
Arab-American Family Service Center
Bibi Alli, Neighborhood Stylist

Events

April 7, 2010
Annual Research Day
9:30 – 6:30pm
SUNY Downstate

April 29, 2010
Community-Based Participatory Research Workshop I
8:30 – 1:30pm
Brooklyn Borough Hall

July 1 – 31, 2010
Health Science Academy
Summer Health Disparities Program (for High School Students)

BHDC Making Strides: New Funding Supports Partnership

The Brooklyn Health Disparities Center (BHDC) continues its mission of reducing health disparities in minority and new immigrant communities throughout the borough. As part of President Obama’s American Recovery Reinvestment Act, the BHDC received National Institutes of Health funding in September 2009.

Community engagement and capacity building are the overarching principles guiding the Center’s efforts. Funding support to improve health, and its social determinants, amongst racial/ethnic minorities and immigrants is an important strategy for reducing health disparities in Brooklyn where minorities make up over 60% of the population.

Through the leverage of its core partners, the Brooklyn Health Disparities Center is collaborating with community-based organizations that provide critical services to underserved residents. “There is increasing evidence pointing to the importance of community involvement in health advocacy and long-term sustainable community solutions because of their understanding of the cultural and socioeconomic characteristics of their communities,” says Yvonne Graham, Deputy Borough President of Brooklyn.

BHDC is poised to maximize its effectiveness by training these organizations to engage policy makers and researchers in their service delivery models, thus creating greater advocacy opportunities to make Brooklyn equitable for all.

Research & Training: Local and National Presentations

Omar Abo Al Haija’a, Cathy Hamlet, Kaushal Kalra, Renelle Pointdujour, Monica Singh and Ayesha Turner are six disparities researchers who presented their research findings during SUNY Downstate’s Annual Research Day on April 7th and will present at several national scientific meetings in the coming months (i.e., National Medical Association, American Heart Association, Associated Professional Sleep Societies).

Sleep disorders, including excessive daytime sleepiness, short sleep duration, insomnia, and rest-activity cycles, were explored. Researchers demonstrated the association between sleep disorders and chronic conditions such as obesity and hypertension and the differences in clinical outcomes based on race/ethnicity and country of origin. For instance, preliminary analyses have shown that US-born hypertensive Blacks are twice as likely as foreign-born hypertensive Blacks to exhibit daytime sleepiness, which often occurs as a result of insufficient sleep, sleep apnea, illicit substance use, and/or medical and psychiatric conditions.

BHDC’s Research Core has supported numerous trainees, including medical students, residents, fellows, faculty, and community physicians interested in multiple aspects of health disparities research. Trainees have also co-authored abstracts and published scientific papers addressing minority and immigrant health disparities. These activities are essential to addressing the shortage of minorities engaging in biomedical research and clinical practice.
**DID YOU KNOW?**

- Ideal adult blood pressure (BP) is 120/80. BP is considered high if the upper number (systolic) is 140 or above OR the lower number (diastolic) is 90 or above.

- Body Mass Index* (BMI) measures the proportion of weight to height.
  - Underweight: less than 18.5
  - Normal: 18.5 – 24.9
  - Overweight: 25 – 29.9
  - Obese: above 30

- Optimal total cholesterol level should be less than 200 mg/dL

- Waist circumference measures abdominal fat. Normal measurement for women is less than 35 inches, and for men less than 40 inches.

*For more information on the BMI chart visit [http://www.consumer.gov/weightloss/bmi.htm](http://www.consumer.gov/weightloss/bmi.htm)

---

**Progress in Community Engagement and Outreach**

The **Community Outreach & Information Dissemination Core’s (COID)** has developed and pilot tested its cardiovascular disease curriculum to train stylists to deliver heart health messages to their African American and Afro Caribbean customers.

The ultimate goal of this project is to improve heart health amongst African American and Afro Caribbean women by implementing a culturally appropriate intervention in Brooklyn salons.

Beyond the salon, community engagement activities are expanding to students and community leaders. The **Community Outreach Core** is developing a health disparities curriculum for the Arthur Ashe Institute’s Health Science Academy students. The Health Science Academy is a three-year science enrichment program for high school students interested in pursuing careers in health. In addition to the health disparities curriculum, students will have internship opportunities at partnering community-based organizations in July 2010.

As community partners, these organizations will receive training on Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR), which promotes campus-community partnerships. Trainings will be conducted in April and June 2010 and cover four general areas: strategic partnerships, program evaluation, project planning/grant writing, and advocacy.

Student summer internships and community workshops to strengthen organizational capacity will continue into 2011. Together, community partners and future leaders will contribute to the goal of eliminating health disparities.

---

**Summer Institute Program to Increase Diversity (SIPID) in Cardiovascular Health Disparities Research**

BHDC has created the **Summer Institute Program to Increase Diversity (SIPID)**, a research career advancing opportunity, which provides intensive didactic and mentored research training in cardiovascular health disparities.

This mentored research program addresses the difficulties experienced by junior investigators (with a terminal degree, e.g., MD, PhD, EdD) in establishing independent research programs and navigating through the academic ranks.

Dr. Tené Lewis is a stellar example of SIPID scholarship. Her primary research interests are psychosocial epidemiology and heart disease in women. Dr. Lewis has several recently published manuscripts featured in *Psychosomatic Medicine* and the *Journal of Gerontology*, contributing to the growing number of minority scientists addressing disorders related to the heart, lung, blood and sleep.

**SIPID is funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI).**

For more information, contact the Brooklyn Health Disparities Center at (718) 270-2716.

---

Tené T. Lewis, PhD, SIPID Scholar
Assistant Professor
Yale University School of Medicine
Department of Epidemiology & Public Health
According to the 2000 U.S. census, New York City has the largest Arab population in the country, a community that has found itself underserved in many areas. In 1993, the Arab-American Family Service Center (AAFSC) was initially established to assist families in filling out applications for Medicaid, HealthPlus and Child HealthPlus, and has since become one of the largest social service organizations in nation. Its mission is to strengthen families, foster the healthy development of youth, encourage civic participation and ensure the individual’s well-being in the transition to life in the new culture.

Now, not only does the AAFSC enroll on average 100 families per month into health plans that best fit their specific needs, but it also provides translation services and conducts health fairs and workshops.

According to Maha Attieh, Health Program Coordinator, “Many Arab immigrants are under-informed and under-insured and many have not seen a doctor in years, since advertisement for health services in New York City is poor and is seldom available in their own language. As a result, they don’t know what services are available or which hospitals they can go to.” She further noted that cultural differences and the language barrier often prevent new immigrants from seeking healthcare. To help combat this problem, Ms. Attieh is currently creating a directory of Arab speaking physicians and providers. AAFSC also provides legal, immigration and SAT prep services. For more information, visit www.aafsc.org or call (718) 643-8000.

Bibi Alli, Neighborhood Stylist

Bibi Alli, owner of Bibi’s Unisex Salon, located at 697 Flatbush Avenue, in Brooklyn has participated in the outreach program to inform and educate the community about cardiovascular disease.

Ms. Alli, a neighborhood resident for the past 23 years, explains how she was initially invited by the Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health to attend training seminars at SUNY Downstate in order to help disseminate information about breast cancer to her clients.

“There is a lack of knowledge in this neighborhood. I was 41 years old before I had my first mammogram.” said Ms. Alli. “The program informed me. I had no idea about taking care of myself or others. It has helped me not to fall into the trap of sickness.”

Because of her commitment to the community, Ms. Alli now serves on the AAIUH Health and Beauty Council which advises and offers suggestions to the Community Core. “I try to always make the time to attend the seminars and I wish other salons would become involved,” says Ms. Alli.

The veteran stylist shows videos and distributes informational brochures relating to health issues in her beauty parlor. She said her clients are very receptive of the information.

At the time she was approached to participate in the initial program, Ms. Alli said she was planning on leaving the beauty business and the city, but her involvement has kept her in the community.

“I know that the information I have given out has helped a lot of people,” she said proudly. “In this community we are into outward beauty. Now we are into inward beauty too.”

Sleep Disorders Statistics

- 82% of men and 93% of women with sleep apnea (temporary suspension of breathing) in the United States remain undiagnosed.
- Blacks are three times as likely to experience severe sleep apnea as their white counterparts.
- Blacks report fewer sleep problems to their physicians than whites.
- Blacks with health insurance and access to healthcare are less likely to seek treatment for sleep apnea compared with whites.
- Sleep duration of less than 6 hours, (considered a health hazard) is more prevalent among blacks.
- Sleep loss, often a secondary result of sleep apnea, is associated with obesity, diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease.
- 91% of black patients that followed recommendations to undergo a sleep evaluation received a diagnosis of sleep apnea.
- 33% of blacks interviewed considered snoring to be normal, relative to 20% of whites.
- Ethnic and cultural factors influence rates of insomnia problems.
- Approximately 60-90% of patients with sleep apnea disorders are obese.

For more information on sleep disorders, please contact Dr. Girardin Jean-Louis at (718) 270-2716.
Community Advisory Board

**American Cancer Society**  
31 Washington Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718-237-7851  
[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**Arab-American Family Support Center**  
150 Court St 3rd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
718-643-8000  
[www.aafsc.org](http://www.aafsc.org)

**Brooklyn Perinatal Network**  
30 Third Avenue, Room 622  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-643-8258

**Caribbean Women’s Health Association**  
21 Snyder Avenue  
Brooklyn, New York 11226  
[www.cwha.org](http://www.cwha.org)

**Diaspora Community Services**  
182 4th Avenue  
2nd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-399-0200, 718-855-6160  
[www.diasporacs.org](http://www.diasporacs.org)

**Community Counseling and Mediation**  
123 Linden Boulevard, Room 20  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-693-5700  
[www.flatbushhc.org](http://www.flatbushhc.org)

**Greater Brooklyn Health Coalition**  
885 Flatbush Avenue  
4th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-940-3453  
info@gbhc.org

**Haitian Centers Council**  
10 St. Paul’s Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-940-5271

**Korean Community Services (KCS) Public Health Program**  
149 West 24th Street  
New York, NY 10011  
212-463-9685  
[www.kcsny.org](http://www.kcsny.org)

**Make the Road New York**  
301 Grove Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11237  
718-418-7690  
[www.maketheroad.org](http://www.maketheroad.org)

**Diaspora Community Services**  
182 4th Avenue  
2nd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
718-399-0200, 718-855-6160  
[www.diasporacs.org](http://www.diasporacs.org)

**Community Counseling and Mediation**  
123 Linden Boulevard, Room 20  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-693-5700  
[www.flatbushhc.org](http://www.flatbushhc.org)

**Greater Brooklyn Health Coalition**  
885 Flatbush Avenue  
4th Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-940-3453  
info@gbhc.org

**Haitian Centers Council**  
10 St. Paul’s Place  
Brooklyn, NY 11226  
718-940-5271

**Korean Community Services (KCS) Public Health Program**  
149 West 24th Street  
New York, NY 10011  
212-463-9685  
[www.kcsny.org](http://www.kcsny.org)

**Make the Road New York**  
301 Grove Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11237  
718-418-7690  
[www.maketheroad.org](http://www.maketheroad.org)

**Core Partners**

- Association of Haitian Physicians Abroad  
- Brookdale Hospital Medical Center  
- Cornell University  
- Kingsbrok Jewish Medical Center  
- Kings County Hospital Center  
- Long Island University  
- New York University  
- Provident Clinical Society  
- Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Sciences, City College of New York  
- Staten Island University Hospital

**Mission**

The mission of the Center is to develop and implement models to reduce health disparities among minorities and new immigrant populations in Brooklyn through basic, clinical, behavioral and community-based participatory research, community education and outreach, and health professional training.

**Vision**

The Center is envisioned as a nationally recognized leader in the elimination of health disparities focused on minorities and immigrant populations. Through the development of community partnerships, the Center will work collaboratively to conduct research, develop interventions, provide training, inform policy decisions, and exchange information that will increase all partners’ capacity to eliminate health disparities.

**Core Partners**

- SUNY Downstate Medical Center  
  450 Clarkson Avenue  
  Brooklyn, NY 11203  
  718-270-1568

- Brooklyn Borough President’s Office  
  207 Joralemon Street  
  Brooklyn, NY 11201  
  718-802-3700

- Arthur Ashe Institute for Urban Health  
  450 Clarkson Avenue  
  Box 1232  
  Brooklyn, NY 11203  
  718-270-3101

- Brooklyn Health Disparities Center  
  450 Clarkson Avenue  
  Box 1199  
  Brooklyn, NY 11203  
  BCHD@downstate.edu  
  718-270-2716