

Health Disparities Task Force Meeting |MINUTES

October 22, 2020 / 1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M. | Location: Via WebEx/Teleconference

Meeting called by:	Office of Minority Health and Disparities Elimination	Approximately: 65 ppl
Type of meeting:	Weekly Health Disparities Task Force	
Facilitator:	Monique Anthony, Director	

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION

Focus: Tennessee Community-Engagement Research Alliance Against COVID-19 in Disproportionately Affected Communities (CEAL) Program

Presenter: Paul D. Juarez, PhD, Professor and Vice Chair for Research, Department of Family and Community Medicine, Meharry Medical College

Summary: We recently received a NIH grant award, called the Tennessee Community-Engaged Alliance against COVID-19 (TN CEAL). The TN Statewide CEAL team is comprised of the following individuals listed below.

TN Statewide CEAL

- Paul D. Juarez, PhD, Principal Investigator
- Neely Williams, EdD, Director, Community Engagement

West Tennessee CEAL RRC

- Altha Stewart, MD, West TN Regional CEAL co-PI
- Jim Bailey, MD, West TN Regional CEAL co-PI
- Cherokee Health Systems

Central Tennessee CEAL RRC

- Stephanie Miller Hughes, PhD, Central TN Regional CEAL co-PI
- Consuelo Williams, MD, Central TN Regional CEAL co-PI
- Matthew Walker Comprehensive Health Center

East TN CEAL RRC

- Parinda Khatry, PhD, Cherokee Health Systems, East TN Regional CEAL co-PI
- Abigail Mann, MD, ETSU, East TN Regional CEAL co-PI

- Cherokee Health Systems

We have two program objectives, the first one is to conduct urgent community- engaged research and outreach focused on COVID-19 awareness and education and the widespread misinformation about COVID-19. The second, to promote and facilitate inclusion of diverse racial and ethnic populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic in COVID-19 vaccine trials.

Our research project hypothesis, “Vulnerable populations that receive COVID-19 health education plus assistance in addressing social inequities will experience better outcomes than those who receive health education only.” The social inequalities that we are going to address with the group include limited or no access to food, personal protective equipment (PPE), technology/internet, health/mental health care, and lack of income/social support. The outcomes we are going to be tracking include changes to COVID-19 knowledge, awareness and adaptation of preventive measures; COVID-19 testing; vaccine readiness; and changes in vaccine uptake; and participation in COVID-19 vaccine trials. This research project will employ Community-based Participatory Research strategies. We are recruiting community members through our regional sites in the design. We are still developing the pre-post survey measures that will be used. We hope to engage our partners in recruitment through referrals from CHCs (community health centers) and community partner organizations. We are seeking to identify and target the most vulnerable populations in each of the three regions. We expect to begin recruitment for this clinical trial starting January 2021.

In terms of community participation, we are looking to engage interested community partners in the development and approval of the final surveys, development of procedures, identification of vulnerable populations, recruitment and referrals, and with the dissemination of information. The second objective of this program is to recruit primarily African Americans, Latinx, and other vulnerable populations for COVID-19 vaccine trials. This can pose a bit of a problem due to certain barriers in these communities such as misinformation, history of mistrust, lack of knowledge and awareness, anti-vaccination beliefs, and political dynamics. Our overall strategy focuses on not just recruiting for COVID-19 vaccines, but also to embed the participation of broader efforts. Some of those efforts include health promotion, clinical care, testing and social inequities.

We recognize people are choosing to avoid safe practices around COVID-19. It seems to be centered around people believing COVID is a hoax or do not exist. Consequently, we have developed tailored messages around racial and ethnic differences, culture and lived experiences, linguistic, literacy, and community. The messages will be developed in collaboration with our community partners. We hope to have the material available in difference languages and will make sure messages are targeted towards the community we are trying to reach. We are looking to identify and engage some trusted people from these targeted communities we need to reach. We know having a trusted messenger is equally important when reaching out to these communities.

There are 50 COVID-19 vaccine trials at different phases.

Stage III Trials in Nashville include:

- Moderna (mRNA-1273) VUMC-

- Novavax—(NVX-CoV2373) Meharry (expected to start in November;
- Sinofax (CoronaVac) Meharry will start in Dec/Jan
- AstraZeneca (AZD1222) Clinical Research Associates /Metro Public Health Department

Some other Phase 3 COVID-19 Vaccine Trials include:

- Pfizer/BioNTech (BNT162)
- Janssen (Ad26.COV2.S)
- Eli Lilly (Blaze-2)
- Regeneron (Gilead)
- Johnson & Johnson (JNJ-7846735)
- CanSino Biologics (Ad5-nCoV)

So again, there are approximately about 12 different trials going on someplace in Tennessee. There are different organizations, which are usually a research organizations or academic medical centers that oversee these trials. Some of these trials are on a national scale.

The Tennessee CEAL Program invites TDH (Tennessee Department of Health), OMH, (Office of Minority Health), and Health Disparities Task Force and its members to participate in the following:

- Participation in statewide research project to increase COVID-19 awareness & safety
- Assist with the tailoring of COVID-19 messaging to different populations
- Participate in bi-weekly regional CEAL RRC meetings
- Participate in bi-weekly, statewide research meetings
- Participate in monthly statewide TN CEAL meeting

Through these meeting we are developing protocols, working to identify intervention, identifying messaging, and identifying the communities we want to target.

Member Comments: Announcements and Upcoming Events

Presenter: Monique Anthony, Director, Office of Minority Health and Disparities Elimination

Summary: Some upcoming COVID-19 testing dates and times are listed below.

Saturday, October 24, 2020, 9:00am-12:00pm

Grundy County

Grundy County High School, 24970 TN-108, Coalmont, TN, 37313

Fentress County

Fentress County Senior Citizens Center, 308 South Main St., Jamestown, TN, 38556

Dyer County

Dyersburg High School, 125 US-51 Bypass, Dyersburg, TN, 38024

Saturday, October 24, 2020, 10:00am-1:00pm

Hardeman County

Jones Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, 3190 Hwy 18 S, Grand Junction, TN 38039

Please also remember to sign up for Meharry Medical College's Eighth Annual Dr. Pamela C. Williams Breast Cancer Memorial Virtual Lecture. It will be held on Thursday, October 29, 2020, 11a-12p.

Thank you everyone for your thoughts and your input. We want to make sure we are continually staying thoughtful to your concerns related to the community.

Resources mentioned during call:

**Tennessee Community-Engagement Research Alliance Against COVID-19
(TN CEAL Program)**

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Principal Investigator Department of Family & Community Medicine
Medical Meharry Medical College
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Next Meeting: Thursday, October 29, 2020 from 1pm-2pm via WebEx. WebEx details are as follows: Meeting number (access code): 610 214 092

Meeting password: Health

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