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Advancement of Medicine

One of my most notable activities in 2023 was co-convening the Black Maternal & Child Health World Café — Solutioning for Black Mortality. The event, held at Malcolm X College in Chicago, was intentionally held in the community to engage patients, community members and students in generating ideas to address the Black maternal mortality crisis. There were over 80 individuals in attendance. All notes from all tables were placed on Post-It notes using mural virtual whiteboard for thematic analysis. Patterns and themes were created with two coders independently coding the data and resolving discrepancies. Questions focused on addressing myths related to black maternal health and the fact that Black women are three times more likely to die in childbirth than women of other races/ethnicities. Additional questions posed included:

- Why do health care providers have difficulty listening to and believing Black women?
- How can we train future health care professionals to address this issue?
- Who is needed to help solve this crisis?

Key solutions include community building for awareness; improving advocacy and patient/provider relationships; and advocating for father and family involvement throughout the childbearing period and for at least the first three years of the child's life.

Research

In addition to supporting our outreach and presentations, funds from the endowment supported recognition at the Rush memorial service for Dr. Iris Shannon, a distinguished alumna of Rush University College of Nursing and a historical figure in the advancement of public health nursing. Dr. Shannon was a founding faculty member of the College of Nursing and the founding chairperson of



its Department of Community Nursing from 1972 until her retirement in 1997. She was co-developer of the first nurse practitioner program in Illinois. Among her many significant accomplishments, Dr. Shannon was vice president of the Chicago Board of Health for over 10 years and president of the American Public Health Association.

Grants

- Co-investigator: “Black Girls Move: A Daughter/ Mother Intervention to Prevent Obesity by Increasing Physical Activity and Improving Dietary Intake Among Black Adolescent Daughters,” Diversity Supplement.
- Mentor: PI: Emezue, Chuka - BrotherlyACT: “Developing a Novel Equity-Focused Coping- and Life-Skills Digital Tool for Sustained Violence Prevention Among Young Black Males in Chicago,” Pilot Grant, Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network.
- Collaborator: “Project Revive: Resilience Empowered Villages in Virtual Environments,” Clinical Research LRP Independent Research Award from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).

Presentations

- Racial healing workshop, facilitated by Dr. Kenneth Hardy, PhD, which allowed participants to connect with each other and interrogate racial socialization to better engage across different identities. Rush University, (Virtual, 16 hours of sessions)
- Restorative Justice training, to prepare the next generation of diverse leaders to embrace personal and community empowerment, collaboration, and personal accountability to address harm and strengthen relationships. University of San Diego Center for Restorative Justice. (Virtual, three-day workshop)
- “Implementing Digital Mental Health for Teens into Pediatric Primary Care: Diverse Needs Across Chicagoland Systems,” poster presentation, 16th Annual Dissemination and Implementation Conference, 2023, Arlington, VA.
- “Covering Father Inclusive Prenatal Care: The Health Benefits of Co-parenting Counseling and Parent Education for Fathers,” podium presentation, Illinois Association of Medicaid Health Plans, 2023 Annual Conference 2023, Oak Brook, IL.

- “Increasing Collaboration Among Future Health Professionals,” invited workshop facilitator, Macy Faculty Scholars Annual Meeting, Washington, DC.
- “Fathers’ Perspectives—The Reality of How Families Are Affected by Maternal Mortality and Morbidity,” invited podium presentation: It Takes a Village Mortality World Café, Chicago, IL.
- “Innovations to Attract and Retain PhD Students and Faculty: Transforming Institutional Culture for Retaining Diverse PhD Prepared Faculty,” podium presentation: American Association of Colleges of Nursing Doctoral Education Conference, Coronado, CA.

Publication Highlights — Abbreviated

- “mHealth uses and opportunities for teens from communities with high health disparities: A mixed-methods study,” *Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science*, 2023.
- “Grandmothers residing with grandchildren: Social determinants of health, health behaviors and health outcomes,” *Journal of Women & Aging*, 2023.
- “A technology-enhanced intervention for violence and substance use prevention among young Black men: Protocol for adaptation and pilot testing,” *JMIR research protocols*, 2023.
- “Rationale and design of the Heart-to-Heart study: A church-based intervention to reduce blood pressure in African Americans,” *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 2023.

The Year Ahead: 2024 and Beyond

In the year ahead, I will be prioritizing efforts to address Black maternal and child mortality and morbidity. Unfortunately, too many women and infants die every year, during and around childbirth, and even up to a year later. This devastating outcome in the United States is far too common. Approximately 700 women die from pregnancy or delivery complications each year. According to the Centers for Disease Control, more commonly referred to as the CDC, 80 percent of these deaths are preventable. In addition, about 30,000 women experience severe pregnancy complications. The significant differences in maternal mortality and illness based on sociodemographic factors such as race and ethnicity, education, and rural isolation complicate the issue. Black mothers and babies experience the worst outcomes. The United States spends more health care dollars trying to address this issue than other developed countries by focusing on traditional prenatal care, newborn care, neonatal intensive care units, staff, and procedures used in labor and delivery units.



Improving maternal and child health outcomes calls for a transformational approach that extends far beyond the limited time frame of care that is currently available. In addition, an expanded health care team that includes fathers, families, community members, doulas, community health workers and midwives is needed. Finally, the diversity of individuals in these professions needs to be expanded. I intend to focus on working with the community to devise a strategy to engage with an expanded health care team in wrap around care that provides a “fence of protection” for mothers and their children.

With Gratitude

I would like to reiterate my sincere thanks for your generous investment in my career and for enabling me to follow my passion: making sure that childbearing for all mothers is safe and equitable, and that all babies are born at their healthiest, live well beyond their first year of life, and grow into healthy, productive adults.