

Chuka Nestor Emezue, PhD, MPH, MPA, CHES

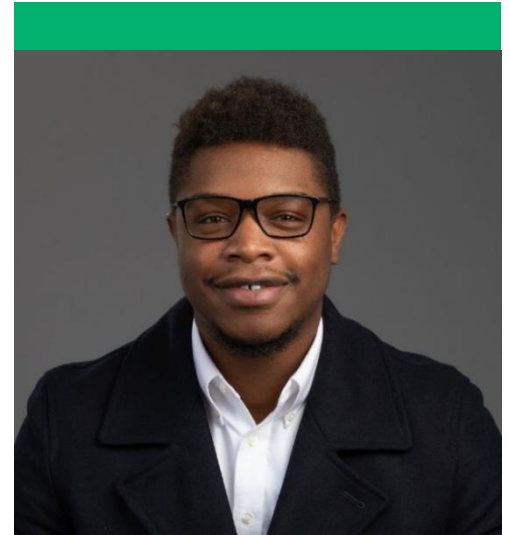
The John L. and Helen Kellogg Endowed Faculty
Scholar in Women, Children and Family Nursing

Advancement of Medicine

In 2025, my work advanced prevention-oriented, equity-driven approaches to youth and family health, with a focus on violence prevention, mental health and the biological embedding of adversity. Across research, community engagement and education, I prioritized translating rigorous science into practical interventions that improve health outcomes for populations historically underserved by health care and research systems.

A central research priority was strengthening a cohesive, prevention-focused program of scholarship that bridges social context, behavioral health and biology. I submitted a National Institutes of Health, or NIH, R01 grant examining how chronic stressors, such as community violence, poverty and food insecurity, and structural inequities become biologically embedded through stress-response systems, including neuroendocrine and microbiome pathways. This work advances precision prevention by shifting attention upstream, from treatment to early identification of vulnerability and resilience during adolescence and early adulthood. In parallel, I developed a scoping review with an international team that integrates structural epidemiology and ecosocial theory to link lived experience with measurable biological and behavioral outcomes.

Supported by the Rush to Progress Pilot Award, I also continued pilot testing **BrotherlyACT**, a scalable app- and web-based intervention for young Black boys and men who use and survive interpersonal and community violence. Using community-engaged methods, including participatory design through the EMERGE Innova+ions Lab and active involvement of a youth advisory board, we refined trauma-informed tools addressing coping, emotional regulation, firearm safety and healthy decision-making. These tools are designed to complement clinical and community-based care and expand access to prevention services in under-resourced settings.





Community engagement remained foundational through sustained partnerships across Chicago's South and West Sides, ensuring relevance and real-world uptake. Educationally, I integrated this work into teaching and mentorship, expanding training pathways for high school, undergraduate and graduate trainees. National dissemination through invited presentations, competitive grant activity, and peer-reviewed publications further amplified the impact of this work on advancing medicine and public health.

Community-Engaged Research

I led the Technology and Adolescent Mental Health Internship, or TAMI, Program, now in its third year. In 2025, the program supported 30 Chicago-area high school students from eight schools with an eight-week-long curriculum on youth mental health, violence prevention, research literacy and community-engaged science. The program ended with a graduation ceremony at Rush University, attended by students and families, reinforcing institutional belonging and the value of youth participation in academic health research. Several TAMI alums have advanced into training opportunities, strengthening local pathways into health and research careers.

We expanded youth-engaged scholarship through a year-long Youth Advisory Board of seven high-performing students from this cohort. These students will collaborate across the research lifecycle, from measure refinement and recruitment strategy design to the interpretation of findings using community-based participatory research principles. In addition, Youth Advisory Board members are also positioned as co-authors on a forthcoming scholarly manuscript. They receive semi-structured mentorship in ethical research conduct, reflexivity and dissemination. This model advances health care scholarship by training youth as knowledge producers with lived expertise.

Publication Highlights

- Emezue, C., Bishop-Royse, J., Froilan, A., Wilkes, T., Karnik, N. S., & Julion, W. A. (2025). Evaluating a digital intervention to reduce aggression and pro-firearm-violence attitudes among young Black males: A pretest-posttest feasibility study. *JMIR Pediatrics and Parenting*. 8(1), e70048.
- Emezue, C., Froilan, A. P., Dunlap, A., Shipman, A., Feliciano, D., Ortega-Chavez, S., Jr., & Dan-Irabor, D. (2025). Contemporary Coping Patterns Among Violence-Impacted Adolescent Black Males: An Interpretive Descriptive Study. *Youth*, 5(2), 44.

- Emezue, C. N., Udmuangpia, T. (2025). Internet-based interventions for violence prevention: a gendered perspective. In J.P. Stamatel (Ed.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Crime and Gender* (accepted). Sage Publications, Inc.

Presentations

- *Responding to firearm violence: Supporting youth, families, and frontline providers* [Invited presentation]. Illinois School-Based Health Centers (SBHC) Webinar Series, Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). August 7, 2025.
- *School nurses on the frontline: Caring for youth and communities affected by firearm violence* [Virtual Conference presentation]. School Nurse Bootcamp Webinar, Joint Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) & Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH). August 12, 2025.
- *Before and beyond the exam room: Building healing pathways for violence-impacted youth* [Virtual Grand Rounds presentation]. Center for Clinical Research and Scholarship (CCRS), Rush University Medical Center. August 14, 2025.
- *Before and beyond the exam room: Building healing pathways for violence-impacted youth* [Virtual Grand Rounds; CE: 1 credit]. Center for Clinical Research and Scholarship Virtual Clinical Grand Rounds (CCRS). Rush University Medical Center, Chicago, IL. August 17, 2025.
- *BrotherlyACT: A new app-delivered program integrating life skills coaching, talk therapy, safety planning, and resource navigation to reduce attitudes towards violence among at-risk young Black boys* [Roundtable presentation]. American Public Health Association 2025 Annual Meeting and Expo, Washington, D.C. November 3, 2025.
- *Aggression profiles, psychological distress, and firearm attitudes among at-risk young Black males: A moderation analysis* [Oral presentation]. American Public Health Association 2025 Annual Meeting and Expo, Washington, D.C. November 4, 2025.
- *More than just anger issues: Why aggression matters in youth firearm violence prevention* [Oral presentation]. Rush University Medical Center, Provost Research Seminar Series (PRSS) 2025. November 11, 2025.

Media Appearances

- Featured Expert, “Ask the Expert” Series: Teaching Boys to Heal, Not Harm [Guest Interview]. myPlan and Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, with support from The One Love Foundation, 2025.



- Rabbani, S., Ogunleye, E. O., Li, Y., and Emezue, C. Trauma-sensitive parenting: Breaking intergenerational cycles of violence. *Society of Behavioral Medicine Outlook Newsletter*, Professional Publication, 2025.
- Raising sons in the age of digital masculinity. *Chicago Tribune* [Op-Ed], nationally syndicated via Tribune Content Agency across 2,000 outlets in 75+ countries, 2025.
- Navigating the “Manosphere” (Invited Guest). NPR’s RESET with Sasha-Ann Simons, WBEZ Chicago (Radio/Podcast), 2025.

Awards and Honors

- Fellow, Diversity Institute for Emerging Leaders, Society of Behavioral Medicine, March 2024–2025.
- Project Pitch Award (Second Place), 26th Nursing Network on Violence Against Women International, 2025.
- Nominee, Rush University Faculty Research Award, Rush University, 2025.
- Alumni Achievement Award, 36th Annual Nursing Banquet, Sinclair School of Nursing Alumni Organization, University of Missouri–Columbia, 2026.
- Firearm Injury Prevention Research in Nursing Scholar, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, competitive national program for early-career nursing scientists in firearm injury prevention, 2026–2027.

The Year Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

My primary research focus will be advancing a stress-embedding study examining how chronic adversity becomes biologically embedded during adolescence and early adulthood, with an emphasis on identifying modifiable pathways for prevention and resilience among Chicago’s youth. This work will begin with a scoping review to map out evidence and mechanistic models linking stress exposure to mental health and resilience among youth exposed to neighborhood disadvantages and adverse childhood experiences.

We will expand recruitment and research infrastructure across Chicago’s South and West Sides by strengthening partnerships with Chicago Public Schools, community organizations and clinical sites,



and by advancing Institutional Review Board approvals to extend BrotherlyACT into school-based settings.

Educationally, we will lead the Technology and Adolescent Mental Health Internship Program into its fourth year in 2026, continuing to build research literacy and community-engaged skills among high school students.

We will also pursue emerging scholarship on street takeovers as a form of youth risk and community trauma, and complete open-access dissemination of funded work on risky firearm behaviors among young Black males.

With Gratitude

I am deeply grateful to the Kellogg Endowment Fund and its donors for their investment in my work and in Rush's broader mission to advance health equity through innovation, education and community partnerships. **Your support affirms the importance of prevention-focused, community-engaged scholarship and will sustain our work with youth, families and communities at the margins of health care and research.** I am honored by your trust and stewardship, and I remain committed to translating that investment into rigorous science, meaningful training opportunities, and tangible improvements in our community's health and well-being.