In Mississippi, 22 percent of residents cope with food insecurity — not knowing where their next meal is coming from, be it nutritious fare or nothing but a bag of sodium-laden potato chips. That is the highest rate in the nation for what the federal government defines as limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or the inability to get nutritious food because of a lack of transportation, money or sheer availability. It might be because a family has run out of resources at the end of the month, but had food at the beginning of the month.

Finding solutions to food insecurity is a major focus of a new partnership that links researchers and population health experts at the University of Mississippi Medical Center and Mississippi State University with UMMC’s Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities. The agreement significantly expands ongoing collaborative projects between MSU and UMMC, and it cultivates new opportunities to end health disparities.

Mississippi State President Dr. Mark Keenum and Dr. LouAnn Woodward, Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs and Dean of the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, sealed the partnership April 18 by signing a memorandum of understanding during a ceremony held on the MSU campus in Starkville.

“This is a new partnership made in heaven,” said Dr. Bettina Beech, UMMC’s Associate Vice Chancellor for Population Health and Executive Director of the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities, which is working to expand existing collaborations and pursuing new opportunities between these higher education institutions.

The skills of researchers from each campus don’t overlap, but instead are complimentary, said Beech, who also is a Professor of Pediatrics and Family Medicine. “Both of them are needed. Mississippi State is very excited about working with us, and they have embraced this idea.”

It’s exciting news to Dr. Leandro Mena, Associate Professor of Infectious Diseases at UMMC and a national authority on risk factors and treatment of patients with HIV infection. **READ MORE**

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**Expanded UMMC-MSU Partnership Tackles Health Disparities**

*As Published in the UMMC News Stories*

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“This is a new partnership made in heaven,” said Dr. Bettina Beech, UMMC’s Associate Vice Chancellor for Population Health and the Institute’s Executive Director. The Medical Center has made a four-year commitment to jointly researching food insecurity, Beech said, honing in on its relation to the health of children, minority males, and those with HIV/AIDS.

The skills of researchers from each campus don’t overlap, but instead are complimentary, said Beech, who also is a Professor of Pediatrics and Family Medicine. “Both of them are needed. Mississippi State is very excited about working with us, and they have embraced this idea.”

It’s exciting news to Dr. Leandro Mena, Associate Professor of Infectious Diseases at UMMC and a national authority on risk factors and treatment of patients with HIV infection. **READ MORE**
New Leaders at the Evers-Williams Institute

Connie Baird-Thomas, PhD

Connie Thomas serves as the Evers-Williams Institute Deputy Director at Mississippi State University (MSU). Her primary roles are to assist the Executive Director in the development and implementation of the Institute’s strategic plans and policies and to serve as the primary liaison between MSU and UMMC. Dr. Thomas is the Associate Director of Social Science Center for Policy Studies, Social Science Research Center, MSU. Her areas of research include STD/HIV prevention and justice involved youth, health disparities and program evaluation. She is also interested in implementation science to promote the integration of research findings into health care policies and practices that impact justice involved youth.

Dr. Thomas received her undergraduate degree from Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MS. She began her graduate studies at Washington University, St. Louis in the area of Sociology/Criminology and received the Ph.D. in Sociology from MSU.

David R. Buys, PhD, MSPH, CPH

David Buys serves as the Evers-Williams Institute Associate Director for Health Disparities and Health Equity at Mississippi State University (MSU) where he focuses on developing partnerships and capacity among teaching, research, and Extension faculty to reduce health disparities in Mississippi. He is on faculty in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion at MSU and is the MSU Extension Service State Health Specialist. Dr. Buys provides leadership for programs that promote health equity including CDC’s National Diabetes Prevention Program, the Health Homes Initiative, and THRIVE!: Your Toolkit for Mental Wellness and Resiliency. He is a Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station Scientist where his research addresses nutrition and place-based health disparities among older adults.

Dr. Buys was previously on faculty in the School of Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where he also earned the Ph.D. in Medical Sociology and a Master's degree in public health.

Leslie Hossfeld, PhD

Leslie Hossfeld serves as the Evers-Williams Institute Associate Director of Food Systems/Food Security/Food Access/Economic Development. Dr. Hossfeld is also Head of the Department of Sociology at Mississippi State University. She is trained in Rural Sociology from North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and has extensive experience examining rural poverty and economic restructuring. Dr. Hossfeld has made two presentations to the United States Congress and one to the North Carolina Legislature on job loss and rural economic decline, and has worked on economic recovery projects for rural North Carolina counties. She is co-founder and President of the Southeastern North Carolina Food Systems Program-Feast Down East, managing several million in grant funds to support local food systems initiatives. Due to her expertise in rural economic development, Congressman Bob Etheridge appointed Hossfeld to the USDA Rural Growth and Opportunity Strikeforce Advisory Board. Dr. Hossfeld is founder and director of the Mississippi State Food Insecurity Project (www.mfip.msstate.edu) that examines food access and food insecurity in the Global South.
UMMC’s Bettina Beech Named an American Council on Education Fellow

As Published in the Clarion-Ledger

Bettina Beech, Associate Vice Chancellor for Population Health and Professor of Pediatrics and Family Medicine, has been named a Fellow of the American Council on Education (ACE). Beech, who also is Executive Director of UMMC’s Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities, will serve as an ACE Fellow for the 2016-17 academic year. She came to the medical center in 2013 from Wake Forest School of Medicine.

Dr. Beech has a bachelor’s degree in sociology and a master’s in public health from Temple University and a doctorate in public health from the University of Texas Health Science Center in Houston. She was a 2011-12 fellow in the Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine Program for Women at Drexel University. She has been principal investigator for multiple studies funded by the National Institutes of Health and serves as a standing member of the NIH Community Level Health Promotion Study Section. Dr. Beech serves as Editor-in-Chief of the journal Family and Community Health.

Welcome Our New Affiliates!

Laura Jean Kerr
Graduate Student and Instructor, Department of Sociology, Mississippi State University (MSU)

Robert McMillen, PhD
Associate Professor & Associate Director, Social Science Research Center, MSU

Cary W. “Bill” Herndon, Jr., PhD
Associate Vice President & Professor, Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine Interim Director, Mississippi Water Resources Research Institute, MSU

Charles “Chip” Templeton, Jr.
Telehealth Education Manager, Extension Associate III, MSU Extension Service

Ronald Cossman, PhD
Research Professor & Research Fellow, Social Science Research Center Director, Mississippi Center on Health Workforce, Social Science Research Center, MSU

If you are interested in becoming an affiliate of the Evers-Williams Institute, please contact Felicia Caples at 601-815-9019 or fcaples@umc.edu.

Get Feedback on Your Research with the Disparities Research Review Group

The Evers-Williams Institute has established a Disparities Research Review Group (DRRG) to support faculty, postdoctoral fellows, and graduate students who are conducting or planning to conduct community-based health disparities research studies.

The DRRG is comprised of academic and community stakeholders who have a depth of knowledge and experience in conducting health disparities-related research.

Investigators may request a Review Group session at any stage of project development (e.g., planning, implementation, analysis, and/or dissemination).

To learn more about the Disparities Research Review Group or to request a review session, please contact Jana Bailey at 601-815-9008 or jbailey3@umc.edu
Thank you to all who participated in Sports for Life on April 9th!

The success of this event was a function of the hard work of the planning and executive committee as well as a group of amazing sponsors (listed below) whose profound generosity inspired us all.

Tougaloo College Wellness Center; Mississippi Basketball Association; Mississippi Food Network; George White; Hope Bank; United Way of Central Mississippi; Jackson Visitors and Convention Bureau; Hooters; CPA Realty, INC; & the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation.

Two of our partners collected 323 pounds of food for the Mississippi Food Network. Two hundred sixty-nine (269) meals can be prepared from this donation. To see us on WAPT News: CLICK HERE

C-HMM Men on the Move!

The Center for Health of Minority Males is pleased to share the following good news:

- **Dr. Collins Airhihenbuwa** has just completed his first semester as Dean of the School of Public Health and Social Justice at Saint Louis University.
- **Dr. Lawrence Potter, Jr.** is completing his first full year as Dean of Arts & Sciences at the University of La Verne.
- **Dr. Derek Griffith** has successfully guided the transition of a department-level Institute for Research on Men’s Health to a university-level Center for Research on Men’s Health.
- **Dr. Roland Thorpe** has been promoted to Associate Professor of Health, Behavior, and Society in the Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University.
- **Dr. Keith Whitfield** has been named Provost at Wayne State University.
- **Dr. Marino Bruce** has been named Associate Director of the Center for Research on Men’s Health and Research Associate Professor of Medicine, Health, and Society at Vanderbilt University.

Congratulations to all of you!

Closing Thoughts and Gratitude

Over the past two years, I have had the honor and privilege of founding and leading the Center for Health of Minority Males within the Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute for the Elimination of Health Disparities. It has been a tremendous experience and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Evers-Williams for her inspiration and shining model of strength, courage, wisdom, and grace as well as Dr. Bettina Beech for her vision, creativity, intelligence, and leadership. I have been blessed to work with accomplished, active, and committed board members who volunteered their time and gave wise counsel. Every member of the clinical and executive advisory boards demonstrated a profound interest in improving the health and life chances of minority boys and men. I cannot thank them and others who invested in C-HMM for providing a rewarding experience that I will carry with me always. Peace and blessings to you all.

Sincerely,
Marino A. Bruce
“What Do You Think of When I Say the Word ‘Snack’?” Towards a Cohesive Definition Among Low-Income Caregivers of Preschool-Age Children

Despite agreement that snacks contribute significant energy to children’s diets, evidence of the effects of snacks on health, especially in children, is weak. Some of the lack of consistent evidence may be due to a non-standardized definition of snacks. Understanding how caregivers of preschool-age children conceptualize and define child snacks could provide valuable insights on epidemiological findings, targets for anticipatory guidance, and prevention efforts. Five interrelated dimensions of a child snack definition were identified: (1) types of food, (2) portion size, (3) time, (4) location, and (5) purpose. READ MORE


Hospitalization: Are We Missing an Opportunity to Identify Food Insecurity in Children?

Food security is the ability to access sufficient food to maintain a healthy, active life. Previous studies link food insecurity with adverse health outcomes. Our objectives were to determine the prevalence of food insecurity, identify sociodemographic risk factors, and quantify receipt of public nutrition assistance among recently hospitalized children in the United States...One-quarter (25.3%) of recently hospitalized children lived in food insecure households. More than one-third of recently hospitalized low-income, uninsured, or Hispanic children lived in food insecure households. In the adjusted analysis, recently hospitalized low-income children and girls had significantly greater odds of living in food insecure households. Of potentially eligible hospitalized children, 26.9% had not received Women, Infants, and Children benefits and 31.0% had not received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits in the past year. READ MORE


HIV/AIDS Research, Education, & Advocacy

Embedding HIV Mentoring Programs in HIV Research Networks

Responding to the demands of the HIV/AIDS epidemic necessitates a diverse scientific and clinical workforce trained in applying interdisciplinary research approaches to address the epidemic domestically and internationally. Ensuring diversity in our workforce requires concerted efforts. Yet, the majority of graduate and post-graduate programs are ill-equipped to provide this type of training. Research networks, the HPTN, HVTN, CFAR and ATN, are uniquely positioned to implement interdisciplinary mentoring programs and all four have done so. The authors describe these programs, the nuts and bolts of program implementation and efforts to recruit and retain diversity scholars. READ MORE


Growing the Pipeline of Diverse HIV Investigators: The Impact of Mentored Research Experiences to Engage Underrepresented Minority Students

Structured, mentored research programs for high school and undergraduate students from underrepresented minority (URM) backgrounds are needed to increase the diversity of our nation’s biomedical research workforce. In particular, a robust pipeline of investigators from the communities disproportionately affected by the HIV epidemic is needed not only for fairness and equity but for insights and innovations to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities in new infections. READ MORE

The National Center for Health Statistics Postdoctoral Research Program

Application Deadline: Sunday, July 31, 2016

National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is a unique public resource for health information. As the country’s principal health statistics agency, NCHS provides information to develop programs and policies that will improve the health of the American people. NCHS’ mission is to monitor the health of the American people, with activities mirroring the multifaceted aspects of the health and health care environment. The objective of the NCHS Postdoctoral Research Program is to provide opportunities for postdoctoral candidates to conduct research in areas of their choosing that are compatible with the interests of NCHS. General research areas include statistical theory, survey methodology, statistical computing, economics, demography, and social and behavioral science.

Addressing Disparities—Cycle 1 2016—PCORI

Closing Date for Application: Monday, June 6, 2016

The purpose of this grant is to provide funding for comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER) studies that evaluate and compare interventions to reduce or eliminate disparities in health and health care. Studies in the Addressing Disparities Program should focus on overcoming barriers that may disproportionately affect the outcomes of specific groups of patients or should identify best practices for reducing disparities.

Health Promotion Among Racial and Ethnic Minority Males (R01)

Closing Date for Application: Wednesday, September 7, 2016

This initiative seeks applications from applicants that propose to stimulate and expand research in the health of minority men. Specifically, this initiative is intended to: 1) enhance our understanding of the numerous factors (e.g., sociodemographic, community, societal, personal) influencing the health promoting behaviors of racial and ethnic minority males and their subpopulations across the life cycle, and 2) encourage applications focusing on the development and testing of culturally and linguistically appropriate health-promoting interventions designed to reduce health disparities among racially and ethnically diverse males and their subpopulations age 21 and older.

The Health of Sexual & Gender Minority (SGM) Populations (R01)

Closing Date for Application: Friday, September 7, 2018

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is committed to supporting research that will increase scientific understanding of the health status of diverse population groups and thereby improve the effectiveness of health interventions and services for individuals within those groups. Priority is placed on understudied populations with distinctive health risk profiles. This funding opportunity announcement (FOA) focuses on sexual and gender minority (SGM) populations, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex populations. Basic, social, behavioral, clinical, and services research relevant to the missions of the sponsoring Institutes and Centers may be proposed.

LEARN MORE
A Healthy Way Today

In conjunction with Jackson State University and Wingfield High School, the Evers-Williams Institute hosted its first annual “A Healthy Way Today” program. The focus of the program was to offer health related resources and information to 50 girls currently participating in JSU’s “Just Like Me” mentorship program. The information presented was to encourage the girls to improve their overall health and well-being. The girls were extremely engaged and walked away with valuable information about physical health, women’s health, mental/emotional health, and nutritional wellness. They were also able to participate in a fun cooking demonstration.

The event was a success with the help of our fantastic presenters and sponsors including:

Benita Burt, Mississippi Roadmap to Health Equity
Amy Riggins, Jackson State University
Mallory Whitfield, Jackson State University
Dr. Sheila Bouldin, UMMC
Dominque Hunter, Mississippi State Hospital
Marcia Hayes, Diabetes Education and Nutrition Services, Central Mississippi Health Services
Dr. Arnita Norwood, Jackson Heart Study, UMMC

Call to Action

Apply for Membership to the UMMC Community Advisory Board!

We are recruiting a diverse group of individuals from the greater Jackson, MS area to become members of the newly formed UMMC Community Advisory Board (CAB) for Clinical and Population Health Research. CAB members will meet quarterly to help advise research leaders at UMMC on issues of interest to the broader community.

Clinical and population health research can often raise important ethical and social concerns that UMMC believes are critical to address. The goal is to have the voice of people who live in the community contributing to developing the policies and decisions made to govern UMMC’s research efforts. COMPLETE AN APPLICATION

For more information, please contact Sydnie Wagner at 601-815-9544 or swagner2@umc.edu for more information no later than May 25, 2016.

Book Corner

The Health Gap: The Challenge of an Unequal World
Author: Michael Marmot

The Health Gap examines the dramatic differences in health. The differences are not a simple matter of rich and poor; poverty alone does not drive ill health, but inequality does. What really makes a difference is creating the conditions for people to have control over their lives, to have the power to live, as they want. Empowerment is the key to reducing health inequality and thereby improving the health of everyone.

Sir Michael Marmot is Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College London, and current president of the World Medical Association. LEARN MORE
WEBINAR—Tackling Food Insecurity in Your Community

Thursday, May 12, 2016 | 1 PM CT

Food insecurity continues to be a pervasive issue in the U.S., particularly for certain populations who face unique challenges to reliable food access. Community-based approaches to addressing food insecurity are crucial to effectively addressing barriers to food security in these populations. This webinar will be recorded and made available on the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition website if you are unable to attend the live event. LEARN MORE

5th Annual University of Vermont Food Systems Summit

“What Makes Food Good?”
June 14-15, 2016 | Burlington, VT

As individuals and communities, our social, environmental, and political values greatly influence our sense of the “good”. In the context of food systems, we may favor certain agricultural production practices, culinary traditions, or labor policies. The 2016 Summit theme is an invitation for us to unpack the assumptions and biases that underpin our perspectives on how the food system should work. The last day to register for the Summit is Monday, June 6. LEARN MORE

Disparities in Health in America: Working Toward Social Justice

June 20-25, 2016 | Houston, TX

American Public Health Association President Camara Jones is a keynote speaker during this six-day workshop that delves into such key topics as health disparities and health policy, mental health and health inequities and how disparities come into play in the areas of tobacco use and human genomics. LEARN MORE

Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo

October 15-18, 2016 | Boston, MA

The Food & Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE) is the annual conference and expo of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and the world’s largest annual meeting of food and nutrition professionals. With educational sessions, lectures, briefings and culinary demonstrations. This year’s speakers include Barbara Corcoran, Juliet Funt, and Porter Gale. LEARN MORE

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