

UMKC Community Health Research Group (CHRG): Background and Projects

The CHRG is located in the UMKC School of Medicine (SOM) Biomedical and Health Informatics Department. We focus on community-engaged and theoretical approaches to address health inequities, particularly among African Americans. With NIH and foundation funding, our large-scale intervention studies address: HIV/STDs/HCV, diabetes/heart disease, mental health, and resilience among youth exposed to community violence. Our projects consist of working collaboratively with our community and health agency partners across the research process to develop, implement, and disseminate scalable and sustainable interventions to improve health outcomes. Along with health agency partners, we've worked with >50 KC urban churches, 10 churches in Alabama, and 6 churches in Jamaica, West Indies. We also train and mentor persons at junior faculty, postdoctoral, doctoral, graduate, and undergraduate levels in community research. A brief description of some of our leading projects is below.

Taking It to the Pews (TIPS)

TIPS is a NIMH-funded R01 clustered, randomized community trial (RCT) on HIV/STD testing, prevention, and linkage to care in African American churches. The multilevel TIPS intervention is delivered by trained church leaders to church and community members with the support of a religiously-tailored toolkit (e.g., sermon guides, church bulletins, text messages). Our health agency partners provide testing/counseling primarily during Sunday morning church services.

Partners: 14 churches in RCT (N=1,500 participants); 16 churches in 2 pilot studies (N=1,000); SOM and Psych (N=50 students); KCMO Health Dept.; KU JayDoc Clinic; KC CARE Health Center; and Childrens Mercy KC (CMH)



Faith Influencing Transformation (FIT)

FIT was developed as a NIMHD-funded multilevel diabetes/CVD prevention intervention in African American churches. Initially implemented in partnership with the YMCA, this project is now delivered in 13 free class sessions by trained UMKC student coaches teamed with church leaders. They facilitate weekly exercise and educational weight loss sessions at the churches. Students also assist with health screenings to track participants' progress. We are working with SOM and CMH to develop church gardens to support healthy eating.

Partners: Thus far, 25 churches (N=1,000 participants); SOM, SON, Pharmacy, and Psych (N=120 students); SOM providers; CMH; and YMCA



Healthy Actions to Impact Minds and Souls (Healthy AIMS)

The Healthy AIMS pilot project is a Health Forward Foundation-funded multilevel mental health prevention and linkage to care (LTC) intervention in African American churches. This project will provide mental health screening and LTC during church services. Also, church leaders will complete the Mental Health First Aid training to be first responders to assist members. Weekly church meditation and yoga classes will be held as prevention services.

Partners: 4 churches (N=200 participants); UMKC Comprehensive Counseling Assessment Services doctoral students and Clinical Health Psych faculty; Swope Health Behavioral Services; KC CARE Health Center; and CMH



Building Bonds

This Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded project aims to develop and pilot a cross-sectoral (faith, justice, health, schools) intervention to enhance resilience among youth exposed to violence. We have developed a Building Bonds youth Community Action Board which includes representatives from the four sectors to guide decision-making about the design of study phases and the resulting intervention.

Partners: Youth Ambassadors (N=300 youth); KCMO Police Department; Violence Free KC; Concerned Clergy; CMH; East High School; Emory University



KC FAITH Initiative

The KC FAITH Initiative Community Action Board (CAB) was established in 2013 with funding from NIHMD. The KC FAITH CAB prioritizes health issues to address in African American communities using health needs assessments, local data, and CAB members' experiential knowledge. The CAB assists the CHRG in setting the research agenda and developing, implementing, and disseminating health interventions in KC faith communities. Coordinated jointly with Calvary Community Outreach Network, the CAB includes persons from >50 KC faith, health, community, and research organizations. More than 30 CAB members attend quarterly meetings.

