



*The Making of
a Health
Disparities
Researcher*

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Professor & Chair, Department of
Health Disparities Research

I am a...

- Community-engaged Health Disparities/Equity Researcher
- Obesity Researcher
- Health Disparities/Equity Leader
- Mentor



Career Path

Background

- Daughter of Jamaican immigrants; first child born in US
- From Roosevelt, NY – small all-Black town on Long Island.
- Poor education; little to no health care

Undergraduate/ PhD/Postdoc

- Undergraduate – UNC-Chapel Hill
- MPH – UNC-Chapel Hill
- PhD – Saint Louis University, SPH
- Postdoctoral Fellowship – Harvard School of Public Health

Academic Positions

- Assistant Professor, MD Anderson, 2006-2012
- Associate Professor, MD Anderson, 2012-2019
- Professor, MD Anderson, 2019-Present
- Department Chair, MD Anderson, 2017

*Health
Disparities
Community-
engaged
Researcher*



Project CHURCH: Creating a Higher Understanding of Cancer Research and Community Health

1

Research study: investigate the role of biological, behavioral, social, and environmental factors on minority health and cancer disparities among African Americans

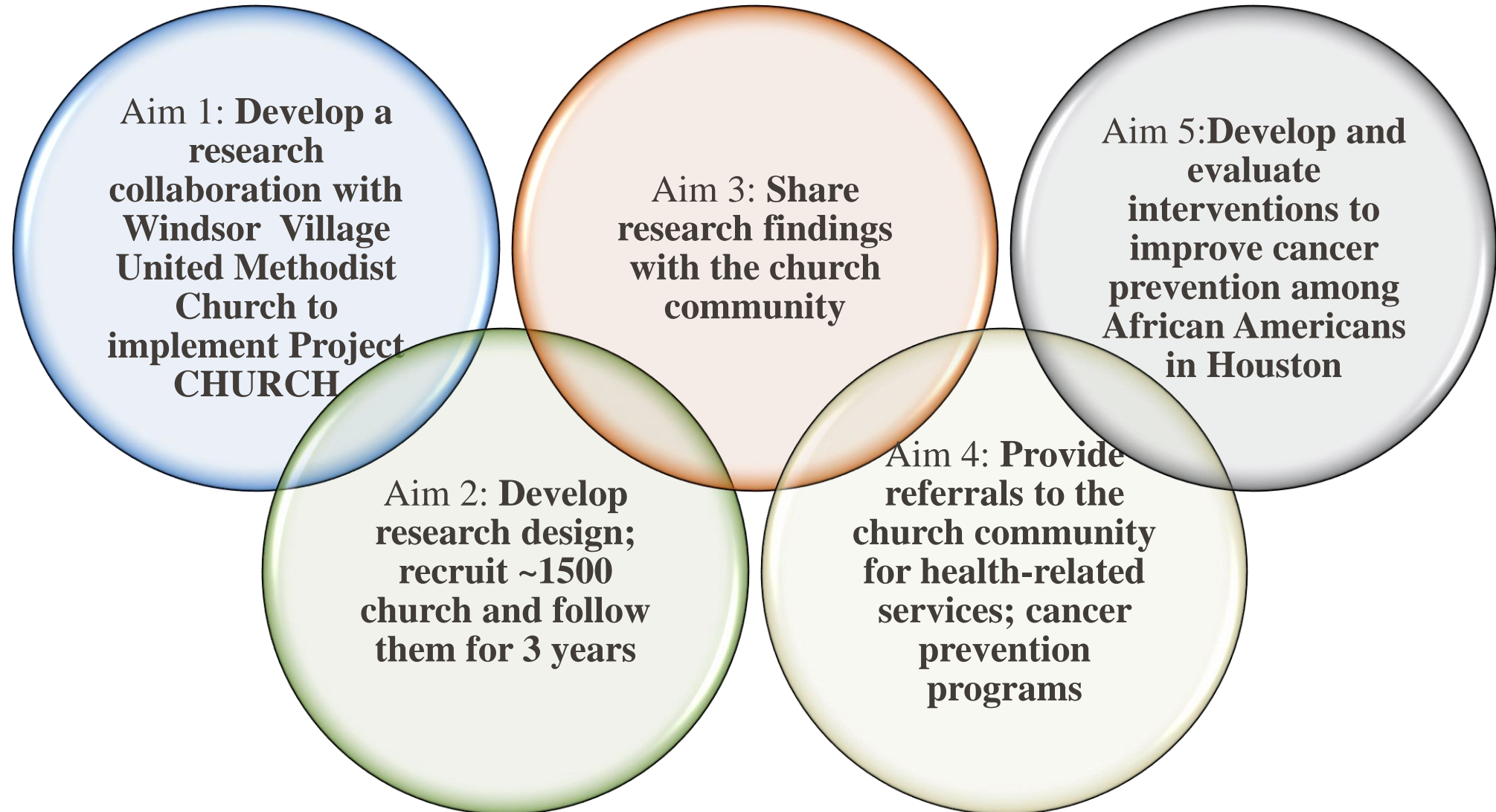
2

Long term goal: use this knowledge to help African Americans in the Houston area reduce their risk for cancer and improve quality of life

3

Partnership: create a longstanding mutually-beneficial relationship for future collaborations and to increase opportunities for African Americans to participate in cancer research

Project CHURCH Aims



Risk Reduction with African American Faith-Based Communities of Houston: Project CHURCH



2008

Project CHURCH
N=2,500



2014

A faith-based partnership to address obesity in African American families (R13)



2017

Community scientist program (CTSA - U54 Program)



2018

A peer and family-based approach to obesity in African American families (ACS-RSG)

2010

Pilot Studies

2016

NON National Outreach Network supplement (P30)

2018

A family-based approach to reducing obesity risk among African American families (R21)

2019 & Beyond

Clinical trials navigators and additional African American community liaisons

Identify opportunities for HPV Vax education in AA (P30 NON)

New partnerships to exploring AA disparities in rural Texas (P30 NON)

*Obesity
Researcher*



Behavior Settings

- Behavior settings are the physical and social contexts in which behavior occurs
- Examples include:
 - Home
 - Schools
 - Neighborhood
 - Parks
 - Recreational facilities
 - Workplace
 - Healthcare settings
 - Residential facilities, i.e., public housing, senior homes
 - Churches

What do we know about the social contextual environment?

- Social support/networks
- Social cohesion/social capital
- Neighborhood socioeconomic status
- Seeing people exercise
- Marital status
- Few children
- Multiple roles

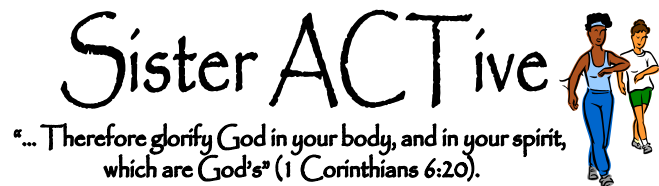
What do we know about the physical environment?

- Safety from crime
- Safety from traffic
- Availability of facilities
- Sidewalks/footpaths
- Shops within walking distance
- Land-use mix

Sample obesity intervention studies

Churches

Sister ACTIVE: Increasing physical activity through Social Support



9/3/20XX

Health Clinics

Path to Health: Health coaching to select commercially-available weight management programs



Neighborhoods

Walking Trails: Reasons for using neighborhood walking paths for physical environmental factors



12

*Health
Disparities
Leader*



Build capacity to advance health equity

- Department chair, Department of Health Disparities Research
- Director, Center for Community-engaged Translational Research
- Co-investigator/Core Lead – CTSA Community Engagement
- CCSG Associate Director, Cancer Health Disparities & Community Outreach
- MD Anderson strategic plan for health equity
- Serve on local and national advisory boards
- Serve my community
- In 2020, helped to support 40 grant applications focused on health disparities research

Mentor



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Current and Prior Mentees



Dr. Scherezade Mama

Tenure-track Asst Prof
at Penn State

Tenure-Track Asst Prof,
MD Anderson Cancer
Center

K07; American Institute
for Cancer Research;
NIH R01 Pending



Dr. Dalnim Cho

Tenure-Track Asst
Prof, MD Anderson
Cancer Center

DoD Prostate Cancer
Grant, NIH R21



Dr. Natalia Heredia

Tenure-Track Asst
Prof, UTHealth Health
Science Center at
Houston, School of
Public Health

Prevent Cancer
Foundation; K01
Pending



Dr. Ivan Wu

Tenure-Track Asst
Prof at University of
Minnesota School of
Public Health

NIMHD K99/R00



Dr. Demetria McNeal

Tenure-Track Asst
Prof, School of
Medicine, University
of Colorado Anschutz
Medical Campus

CTSA Diversity KL2

Good mentors

Tell you the truth; *be open and listen*

Gives you opportunities; *say yes to most*

Shares their ideas; *being innovative can be challenging initially*

Help you grow in areas you are weak; *know your strengths AND weaknesses*

Help you run your own race; *social comparison kills dreams and spirits*

***Good mentorship is
the magic glue***