

The Community Outreach and Health Disparities Core (COHDC) is located at Meharry Medical College.

[Community Outreach and Health Disparities Core Service Request »](#)

[Community Outreach and Health Disparities Core Service Evaluation »](#)

Keywords: [core](#) [community](#)

[Expand](#)

[Margaret Hargreaves, PhD](#), leads The Community Outreach and Health Disparities Core (COHDC) at Meharry Medical College. The goal of the core is to encourage and facilitate effective diabetes translation research among investigators who seek to decrease risks for diabetes and its complications among vulnerable minority populations, especially African and Hispanic Americans. Aims of the core are to increase collaboration among investigators, perform quality intervention research, and increase the rate of behavior change among at-risk individuals. The core offers services to both Meharry Medical College and Vanderbilt University Medical Center investigators. We will work with investigators that have funded research projects and support those that are seeking funding for projects in development.

Three units make up the COHDC:

- The Community Engaged Research Unit
- The Behavioral Intervention Unit, and
- The Assessment, Design, and Analysis Unit.

The Community Engaged Research Unit/Planning Unit

The Planning Unit will engage potential investigators in planning the proposed project. The investigator and team will discuss design possibilities and methods for the translational project being proposed to decrease health disparities. The Planning Unit is led by Dr. Margaret Hargreaves, Professor of Internal Medicine, MMC, and Director of the Department's Prevention Research Unit. She has a history of developing and implementing community-based health projects while selecting one or more key models. Other key members of the Core will include Dr. Maciej Buchowski, biochemical nutrition scientist, and Dr. Yuan Zhou, nutrition intervention scientist, Drs. David Schlundt and Kushal Patel, behavioral scientists and evaluators, Dr. Stephania Miller-Hughes, behavioral scientist, Mr. Jianguo Liu, biostatistician, and Dr. Zudi Takizala, Program Coordinator. These members will assist the projected investigators with planning of the entire proposed project.

The Unit will follow recognized translational principles, procedures and activities that we have used over the course of several years, during our involvement on various community-engaged projects, e.g., Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) 2010 and 2020, and the Community Networks Program Center (CNP/CNPC).

The monograph by RTI International et al (July 2004) outlines critical elements in community-based research, as follows: (i) assembling a research team of collaborators with the potential for forming a research partnership; (ii) guiding decision-making through the structure for collaboration; (iii) defining the research question; (iv) designing the research project; (v) writing the proposal and getting funded; (vi) recruiting and retaining participants; (vii) engaging in formative data collection; (viii) selecting measures, instruments, and data collection procedures; (ix) designing and implementing the intervention; (x) analyzing and interpreting the data; (xi) preparing the manuscript, and (xii) translating/disseminating the research. Training sessions will be an important activity of this Unit. Dr. Hargreaves will also work closely with the leaders of the other two Units described below (Miller-Hughes, Patel).

The Behavioral Intervention Unit

This unit will be led by Dr. Stephania Miller-Hughes, behavioral scientist and translational diabetes researcher at Meharry Medical College. Her long-time program of research is focused on community-engaged efforts to reduce the disproportionate diabetes burden experienced by African American women. She has expertise in lifestyle intervention development and implementation, patient-

centered counseling protocol development and implementation, qualitative research design, implementation, and analysis, survey development, and community engagement. Dr. Miller-Hughes will be assisted by Dr. Yuan Zhou, nutrition intervention scientist. Dr. Zhou has expertise in quantitative and qualitative data analysis from her research work in epidemiology studies and community based interventions.

This unit will offer expertise in design and implementation of behavioral intervention protocols based on existing or new models of behavior change. These services are designed to:

1. Identify and guide in the use of empirically supported behavior change models and theories, such as the Trans-theoretical Model for Change, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Social Cognitive Theory in management of diabetes and related risk factors.
2. Provide expertise in the use of community engagement to facilitate active participation of communities in diabetes-related research, as well as translation and application of research findings to community-based practice.
3. Provide expertise in developing culturally relevant interventions targeting complex social and behavioral problems related to prevention and management of diabetes, such as dietary intake, smoking, obesity, and medical adherence. This includes guidance in piloting interventions for their feasibility, acceptability, and efficacy.

The Assessment, Design, and Analysis Unit

This unit will be led by Dr. Kushal Patel, Associate Professor of Public Health, Health Administration and Health Sciences at Tennessee State University (TSU). He was Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, MMC and an evaluator and investigator in the Department's Prevention Research Unit, performing in this Diabetes Core Unit before transitioning to TSU. He is a clinical psychologist and behavioral scientist with expertise in research design and methodology, behavioral and psychological assessment, program evaluation, and behavior theory. Other key members of the Core will include Dr. Maciej Buchowski, biochemical nutrition scientist, and Dr. Yuan Zhou, nutrition intervention scientist, David Schlundt, and Dr. Stephania Miller-Hughes, behavioral scientist. In addition, this unit will have the consultative services of Dr. William Blot Senior Epidemiologist, Professor of Internal Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC), and Principal Investigator of the Southern Community Cohort Study (SCCS).

Services of the Evaluation Unit are described below:

1. **Behavioral and Psychological Assessment.** The unit will help investigators select existing measurement tools to assess psychological or behavioral variables or design and validate novel tools. Assistance will be provided to develop or adapt tools that are culturally appropriate for use with African Americans and other minority or underserved populations.
2. **Dietary Assessment and Analysis.** The unit will help investigators assess individual dietary intake using food frequency methods, diet diaries, and 24-hour recalls. In addition, the unit will help refine and validate dietary assessment methods and strategies that are culturally appropriate for disparities research.
3. **Physical Activity Assessment and Analysis.** The unit will assist investigators select measurement tools, both electronic instrumentation and questionnaires, to assess physical activity and exercise. Assistance with scoring, analysis, and interpretation of these data will also be provided.
4. **Research Design and Evaluation.** The unit will assist with appropriate research design that uses CPBR and other methodologies to conduct diabetes-related community health research, with special attention given to finding alternatives to randomized between groups designs when these are not feasible in the community context. Evaluation services will include developing and/or selecting appropriate tools to capture process and outcome evaluation.
5. **Community Health Surveys and Needs Assessment.** The unit will assist with developing and or/selecting appropriate community health surveys and needs assessment tools related to understanding the diabetes-related needs, behaviors, barriers, and health status of African American and Hispanic communities.
6. **Anthropometric and Body Composition Measurements.** The unit will provide training in standardized techniques to conduct measurements of weight, height, and waist and hip circumference. The unit will also provide methodology and tools for the measurements of body composition using portable bioelectrical impedance devices.

[Community Outreach and Health Disparities Core Service Request »](#)

[Community Outreach and Health Disparities Core Service Evaluation »](#)

The Center for Diabetes Translation Research is supported by NIH grant DK092986.

Please acknowledge this in your publications.