

# NIH Grant to Address Chronic Diseases That Affect Populations with Health Disparities

The University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Vanderbilt University Medical Center, and Meharry Medical College are the recipients of a \$12.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to jointly develop the Southeast Collaborative for Innovative and Equitable Solutions to Chronic Disease Disparities.

The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities has awarded funds to 11 research institutions to establish and support regional comprehensive research centers on the prevention, treatment and management of



comorbid chronic diseases that disproportionately affect populations with health disparities.

## Risk Factors and Disparities

The Southeast Collaborative, led by four principal investigators, will aim to reduce risk factors for and disparities in diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, and related conditions among African American and Latino populations in the Southeast.

Despite substantial reduction of some chronic diseases and risk factors over the past few decades, the Southeast continues to have the highest number of potentially preventable deaths for each of the five leading causes of death. Racial and ethnic minorities comprise 39% of the population of the Southeast, which includes nearly 15 million African Americans and 9 million Latinos.

“Minorities in the Southeast fare worse on many health indicators compared to other regions, in large part due to poor socioeconomic status, with more than 22% of Southeastern residents living in poverty,” said Roy Weiss, M.D., Ph.D., chair of the Department of Medicine at the Miller School and one of the four principal investigators. “Effectively addressing pervasive chronic disease disparities will require interventions that consider the needs, priorities and lived experiences of those disproportionately impacted.”

The collaborative has four goals:

- Establish the infrastructure to foster research collaborations to reduce chronic disease disparities
- Facilitate a pilot awards program focused on chronic disease disparities that supports career development, and advances use of data science,

technology and bioinformatics to address the complex drivers of health disparities

- Propel novel health disparities research to prevent, treat and manage diabetes, cardiovascular disease and obesity in African American and Latino populations
- Partner with these communities to integrate their priorities into the Center's infrastructure and develop, adapt and test appropriate interventions to eliminate chronic disease disparities

## **Multicomponent Strategies**

Research teams with expertise in social, environmental, behavioral and biological disciplines will collaborate to develop and test multicomponent strategies aimed at the multilevel determinants that drive disparities.

One of the research projects is Reducing Disparities in Sleep Apnea and Related Cardiometabolic Outcomes, led by Naresh M. Punjabi, M.D., Ph.D., chief of the Division of Pulmonary, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine, and Mary Jane and Lino Sertel Professor of Pulmonary Disease at the Miller School.

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