Letter from Acting Director, Dr. Jaclynn Hawkins

First, let me say I am thrilled to be serving as the acting director of the Curtis Center for Health Equity Research and Training while Dr. Watkins is on sabbatical. This is an especially inspiring time at the Curtis Center as the summer weather comes to a close and we settle into another academic year. I am excited about the Curtis Center’s upcoming events and the ongoing research projects we are working on that aim to advance health equity locally, nationally and across the globe. We invite you all to participate in our Health Equity Seminar Series and we look forward to continuing to support the school and wider community by engaging in new and innovative ways to promote health equity.

Dr. Daphne C. Watkins is on sabbatical!

We would like to wish Dr. Watkins all the best as she embarks on this time of rest, research, and writing! Dr. Watkins will resume her position as director of the Curtis Center for Health Equity Research and Training on June 1, 2023.

Featured Curtis Center Signature Program:
*Developing a Partnership to Address Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women in Michigan*
Dr. Katie Schultz is excited to welcome and introduce Sherise McKinney, a Ph.D. student, to this signature program. Sherise started the joint program in Social Work and Sociology this fall. Sherise and Dr. Schultz are currently designing a qualitative study to describe and better understand the role of culturally honoring services in tribal advocacy programs serving victims of violence in Michigan. Their community partner, Uniting Three Fires Against Violence (UTFAV), provides support, training, and technical assistance to tribal advocates in each of the 12 tribes. Culturally honoring services is a term used to describe services that are grounded in cultural and traditional practices and was identified as high priority in the work UTFAV does with advocates.

Click here for a 2-minute video from Dr. Schultz.

Curtis Center Health Equity Seminar Series

Save the date! On Thursday, November 10, 2022, Curtis Center Postdoctoral Research Associate Dr. Ed-Dee G. Williams will present the next Curtis Center Health Equity Seminar.

Dr. Williams' talk will examine depressive symptoms among black autistic youth and addressing issues in mental health help-seeking for Black autistic youth.

Click here to learn more about Dr. Williams.

Meet Alana Ewen, the Curtis Center's newest pre-doctoral fellow!

Alana is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Behavioral Community Health program at the University of Maryland.
School of Public Health. Her research interests lie at the intersection of mental and physical health, specifically focusing on better understanding how chronic stress (e.g., racism and perceived discrimination) impacts the onset and management of type 2 diabetes in Black adults. Alana will primarily be working with Dr. Hawkins and her research team.

Curtis Center Updates

Research Impact

The Curtis Center Team contributed to a CDC/National Network of Public Health Institutes repository of literature highlighting ways to mobilize partners and collaborators to advance health equity and address social determinants of health as they relate to COVID-19 health disparities among populations at higher risk. The final COVID-19 Health Equity Resource Library is now available to all.

Dr. Hawkins has received a 2022 Sun Life "Team Up Against Diabetes" grant for her project in partnership with the Michigan Institute of Urology’s Men’s Health Foundation. The project will use male barbers in a peer-led program for hypertension and diabetes prevention, screening, and self-management behaviors for Black men.

With support from the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, Curtis Center Faculty Affiliate Dr. Jade Burns received an NIH K08 Mentored Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award for her work, “The Use of New Media to Improve Access to Sexual Reproductive Health Services Among Young Black Males in a Community-Based Setting.”

Curtis Center Signature Program Leads Dr. Anao Zhang (PI) and Nina Jackson Levin (Co-I) received an R01 accelerator award from the Rogel Cancer Center to translate their work evaluating an AI-enabled distress screening mobile app for adolescent and young adult cancer survivors into a competitive R01 application.

Recent Publications


Making. Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists (ADCES) In Practice, 10(5).


Educational Impact

Dr. Hawkins presented “African American Men and Type 2 Diabetes: Current Research and The Road Ahead” in a webinar hosted by the American Diabetes Association, on the state of African American men, diabetes and mental health, and their health behaviors. This talk also covered best practices when working with African American men with diabetes and comorbid mental health conditions. Click here to view it on our website.

Dr. Schultz gave a presentation at the 2022 Life Paths Research Center ReilienceCon conference titled, “Strengths, adversities, and psychological functioning among American Indian and Alaska Native people in four southern states.” She also served as a discussant for one of the keynote speakers.

Dr. Schultz was invited to speak at the recent Alaska Indigenous Research Program in Anchorage, AK, where she gave a talk titled, “Cultural Connectedness as a Preventative Factor for Violence & Health Outcomes.”

Curtis Center Postdoctoral Research Associate Dr. Ed-Dee Williams presented on autism and mental health for the International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) Institute 2022 series on Autistic People’s Research Priorities. Click here for the session materials (7/14/22).

Curtis Center Faculty Affiliate Dr. Kara Zivin has been named the Marcia A. Valenstein, M.D., Collegiate Professor of Psychiatry. Read more here.

Community Impact

A Behavioral Health Collaborative for Young Black Men & Boys: The Michigan Health Endowment Fund has funded Packard Health and the Young Black Men, Masculinities, and Mental Health (YBMen) project to develop a network of community organizations committed to building services that address the behavioral health needs of young Black men and boys in Washtenaw County.

Dr. Hawkins has been awarded an ADVANCE Faculty SUCEED grant that will provide pre-tenure faculty and newly tenured faculty from diverse backgrounds a safe space to support one another as they seek to meet tenure track milestones.
What are you doing today to advance health equity?

Land Acknowledgement

“We acknowledge that The University of Michigan, named for Michigami, the world’s largest freshwater system and located in the Huron River watershed, was formed and has grown through connections with the land stewarded by Niswi Ishkodewan Anishinaabeg: The Three Fires People who are the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi along with their neighbors the Seneca, Delaware, Shawnee and Wyandot nations.”

Connect with us!

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