

Community Health Matters

Brought to you by the Community Engagement Research Program (CERP) & Clinical Research Network (CRN)



Atlanta Clinical & Translational Science Institute
Community · Discovery · Training

Inside this issue:

Bringing Consciously Resting Meditation to the Community 2

The Use of Meditation to Reduce Blood Pressure 2

Effect of Melatonin on Nighttime Blood Pressure in African Americans with Essential Hypertension 3

How Can I Participate in Research? 3

High Blood Pressure in Children 4

Where Does Research Happen?

Arlene Chapman, MD
Director, Clinical Research Network (CRN)
Atlanta Clinical & Translational Science Institute
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Arlene Chapman, MD, Professor of Medicine, Emory University School of Medicine

The Atlanta Clinical & Translational Science Institute's (ACTSI) Clinical Research Network (CRN) provides a place where research participants can be a part of a research study in a safe and specialized environment. The CRN provides locations for research participants around Atlanta that include both adults and children. The CRN's role is to provide space and trained personnel to do research. A drug normally used to treat one disease can be researched in a different disease. In some studies, information or biological specimens are gathered. Importantly, we want to give results from our study back to you and your community.

The CRN and the ACTSI's Community Engagement Research Program (CERP) are partners. We work together to make sure that new findings from research studies reach those who will benefit from this knowledge. In this newsletter, we are reaching out to you, to make sure that you and your community can improve your health and quality of life. Thank you so much for your time, effort, and participation.



Alan Richmond, Keynote Speaker of the Community Partnership Forum

Community Partnership Forum a Success

Both community representatives and academic researchers enjoyed a variety of presentations and discussions on community engagement at the first Community Partnership Forum on June 19 at the Emory Rollins School of Public Health. The forum was organized by the CERP Steering Board and went a long way towards meeting the forum goals of forging strong partnerships, accelerating community development, and increasing capacity-building to improve the health of Atlanta citizens.

One of the highlights was the keynote address by Alan Richmond, Director of Jobs and Leadership Development at the North Carolina Institute of Minority Economic Development. Richmond serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Community-Campus Partnerships for Health and is a national leader in community engagement for research. The forum also featured presentations by Dr. Tabia Akintobi and LaShawn Hoffman of the Morehouse School of Medicine Prevention Research Center and Drs. Michelle Kegler and Winifred Thompson of the Emory Prevention Research Center. Ernest Hopkins, Camille Feanny, and Dwight Anderson of the CERP Steering Board led workshops on strategy development. Plans are already underway for the 2015 forum.



Bringing Consciously Resting Meditation to the Community

“CERP was instrumental in helping the Right of Way Collaborative educate, empower, and help reduce stress in African American communities.” - Dr. Doris Patillo

Doris Patillo, PhD, LPC, CACII

Psychologist

2012 Graduate of the Morehouse School of Medicine's Executive and Faculty Development Program

Collaborative Partner with the Recipient of the CERP Grant for CRM

Excess stress in urban African American communities may contribute to the health disparities affecting African Americans. Stress plays a role in the development of cardiovascular disease and hypertension, possibly through the over activation of nerves and hormones.

A Community Engagement Research Program (CERP) grant was instrumental in helping the Right Of Way Collaborative (ROW), in partnership with the Green-Forest Community Development Corporation, to educate, empower, and help reduce stress in African American communities. The partnership is devoted to promoting health and wellness for residents of South DeKalb County and other communities.

In this study, *Consciously Resting Meditation* (CRM) was introduced to groups of clergy, at-risk families, churches, and other groups to reduce stress. A study challenge was the two-day commitment required. It is challenging to put CRM into practice in your daily life for two 20 minute sessions daily. CRM does not

require you to believe it will work. CRM will work when you follow the simple procedure presented in a simple format.

Ninety percent of participants who completed both sessions noted feeling different in ways like sleeping sounder, improved clarity of thought, and slowing down of heart rate. Seventy percent could remember a moment when their thoughts became quieter and 95 percent reported that they know how to use CRM on their own.

Participants also reported waking up more relaxed, feeling less tired during the day, and being more effective at work. Some were unsure of their feeling after the practice of CRM but knew they felt different. The ROW partnership with the help of funding from the CERP mini grant met its goal by helping to dispel the myth of research fear as a negative experience towards African Americans; as this project is mentally and physically safe, no medication is required and there is no cost for participation.

The Use of Meditation to Reduce Blood Pressure



Kofi A. Konwani, PhD

African Americans suffer more from high blood pressure as well as from diabetes, obesity, high cholesterol, and high fats (triglycerides) than other U.S. populations. Morehouse School of Medicine partnered with Emory University to see if Consciously Resting Meditation (CRM) could help reduce these conditions compared to a health education control group. The reason CRM was chosen was because it has been shown to reduce stress, particularly in African American populations.

Dr. Kondwani, Assistant Professor, Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine, Morehouse School of Medicine.

CRM is practiced for twenty minutes twice daily sitting quietly with eyes closed. During CRM, a specific soothing sound is used to calm the mind and relax the body. CRM reduces the stress and fatigue in the body as the mind settles down. When the mind settles down, so does the body. When the body settles down, it heals and purifies itself. A relaxed body will release stress, loosen tight muscles, and bring the body chemistry back into balance.



Dr. Kondwani (third from left) leads a class in low-impact exercise.

At the end of the one year study period, the CRM group showed more improvement than the group that received only health education. Not only was blood pressure lowered in the meditation group, but weight, triglycerides, and blood sugar were reduced as well. This study was published in the *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine*. In addition, a partnership of churches in DeKalb County selected CRM as an intervention they could use immediately.

For more information on Consciously Resting Meditation call Dr. Kondwani at Morehouse School of Medicine: (404) 756-1478.

Effect of Melatonin on Nighttime Blood Pressure in African Americans with Essential Hypertension

Frederic Rahbari-Oskoui, MD
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Division of Nephrology
Emory University

Hypertension and more particularly higher nighttime blood pressure are important risk factors for heart attacks and strokes. This issue happens more often in African Americans. Melatonin is a natural hormone produced by the pineal gland in the brain that is secreted at night. Melatonin supplements are therefore used as a sleep aid. Melatonin has also been shown to reduce nighttime blood pressure in Caucasians, but prior to our research, it had not been tested in blacks.

In a randomized, placebo-controlled clinical trial design, we investigated the effect of oral melatonin intake on nighttime blood pressure in two groups of African American patients with hypertension, at two different doses. Our hypothesis was that melatonin would lower nighttime blood pressure. The study went on for 10 weeks, and 24-hour blood pressure monitoring, lab tests, and sleep studies were performed. We did not find any significant effect of melatonin on nighttime blood pressure in African Americans compared to placebo.

*“Hypertension and higher
nighttime blood pressure
are important risk factors
for heart attacks and
strokes.”*

*-Dr. Frederic Rahbari-
Oskoui*



Dr. Rahbari is involved in caring for patients with cystic and inherited diseases of the kidney and hypertension. His research focuses specifically on polycystic kidney disease and hypertension.

How Can I Participate in Research?

Picture this...you have just been diagnosed with a disease, your doctor provided you with the most up-to-date information he has, and wrote you a prescription for medication to treat your disease. You leave the doctor's office feeling confident that you will get better. But, where did the doctor get his information? Who developed this medication? Research is the answer.

In order to learn about diseases and medications, we need to do research. And to do research, we need people willing to volunteer. ResearchMatch is a national list developed to help connect willing volunteers with researchers searching for people to become involved in their research. It is free and you choose whether or not you ever want to participate in any studies for which you may qualify. To find out more go to www.researchmatch.org.



High Blood Pressure in Children

Don Batsky, MD

High blood pressure is a worldwide health problem that causes heart and kidney disease. The brain may also be injured by high blood pressure. Children with high blood pressure often have high blood pressure as adults. The number of children with high blood pressure has increased due to the increased number of children who are overweight or obese. Almost 1 out of 20 (5%) children now has high blood pressure.

Studies show that children with high blood pressure do not think as well as children with normal blood pressure. Research being conducted at Emory University, the University of Rochester, State University of New York-Downstate and the University of Texas-Houston, is trying to figure out if treating high blood pressure improves the thinking ability of children with mild high blood pressure. If treatment improves thinking, then it is probably important to treat children with mild high blood pressure. This study is more than halfway complete and the final results should be ready in a few years.



Don Batsky, MD, Associate Professor of Pediatrics, Emory University School of Medicine and Director, Pediatric Hypertension Program, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

For additional information, contact Don Batsky, MD, dbatisk@emory.edu, 404-727-5750

This newsletter was supported by Grant Number 8G12MD007602 from the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) and by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences of the National Institutes of Health under Award Number UL1TR000454. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.



The **Atlanta Clinical & Translational Science Institute (ACTSI)** of *Emory University*, with partners *Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM)* and *Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech)*, is one of a national consortium striving to improve the way biomedical research is conducted across the country. The consortium, funded through the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health's Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA), shares a common vision to translate laboratory discoveries into treatments for patients, engage communities in clinical research efforts and train the next generation of clinical investigators. Through the Emory, MSM, and Georgia Tech partnership, laboratory and physician investigators and educators can accelerate the pace of bringing basic research findings to patients and communities.

ACTSI Mission

Through focused **education and training**, innovative **support of discovery**, and **ethical community engagement**, the **collaborative partners** of the Atlanta Clinical & Translational Science Institute rapidly and efficiently **translate scientific discoveries to impact all populations** of the Atlanta community and beyond.

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