



Partnerships *for* Native Health

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

NEWSLETTER | SPRING 2020

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Given the current pandemic and our concern for the well-being of participants and staff during this outbreak, we have taken active steps to reduce risk in close coordination with Washington State University and in accordance with national, state, and local guidance. To practice social distancing, we have stopped in-person contact for most of our studies until this is no longer recommended. We are staying in touch with participants via telephone, text message, e-mail, video conferencing, and social media. Our staff is working from their homes and are in daily communication with each other through e-mail and video conferencing. Our staff are diligent in making sure we reduce as much risk as possible and follow state and federal guidelines. We remain committed to ensuring everyone's health and well-being and we thank all for their patience and flexibility during this unusual time.

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

We are currently accepting applications for the Native Center for Alcohol Research and Education (NCARE) Pilot Project Program. **The deadline to submit a letter of Intent is May 29, 2020.**

The Call for Applications is aimed at promoting innovative research projects that focus on reducing the burden of alcohol use disorders (AUDs) in American Indian and Alaska Native communities (AI/AN) and that will subsequently lead to future external funding. While preference will be given to junior investigators, mid-career and senior researchers who have not conducted alcohol intervention research in Native communities are eligible to apply. For eligibility criteria, full application details, and application forms, please visit ireach.wsu.edu/ncare.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Strong Men, Strong Communities: Cultural Tradition to Improve Native Men's Health

Principal investigator – Ka`imi A. Sinclair

Funded by the National Institutes of Diabetes, Digestive and Kidney Diseases

Strong Men, Strong Communities is the first study funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) that is exclusively designed to address diabetes disparities among American Indian men. American Indian males experience more profound health disparities than their counterparts in all other U.S. racial and ethnic groups. In recent decades, American Indians have experienced a disproportionate increase in diabetes-related complications and mortality compared to all other groups, such that age-adjusted diabetes death rates in American Indian men are now almost twice those in White men. The goal of the Strong Men, Strong Communities intervention is to evaluate a culturally tailored diabetes prevention intervention in three urban U.S. locations.

Native Opportunities to Stop Hypertension (NOSH)

Principal investigator – Dedra Buchwald

Funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

Compared to other races, American Indians experience a heavier burden of risk factors for heart disease, including high blood pressure (hypertension), Type 2 diabetes, and smoking. Medications are often prescribed to lower blood pressure. However, adopting low-salt, heart-healthy diets – collectively known as DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) – has been shown to lower blood pressure with or without medication. In addition, these evidence-based dietary approaches can be more cost-effective and sustainable than daily medication. The goal of this project is to determine whether the culturally tailored intervention will improve blood pressure control in urban American Indians with physician-diagnosed hypertension.



Incident Vascular Brain Injury, Probable Alzheimer's Disease, and Cognitive Change in Elderly American Indians

Principal investigator - Astrid Suchy-Dicey

Funded by the National Institute on Aging

American Indians bear a disproportionate burden of cardiovascular risk factors, which may cause damage to the brain and result in cognitive impairment. However, little is known about other causes of cognitive impairment and dementia in this group. The goal of this study is to establish the frequency, risk factors, and outcomes related to new onset of these conditions among American Indians residing in three regions of the U.S.

URBAN Native Elders (URBANE): Risk and Protective Factors for Alzheimer's and Related Dementias

Principal investigator – Lonnie Nelson

Funded by the National Institute on Aging

Alzheimer's disease and related disorders (ADRD) is a growing public health concern for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) people, but they are underrepresented in ADRD research. Urban AI/ANs represent an "invisible tribe" that is largely absent from health research. The URBANE study will recruit 1,200 men and women ages 55 and older in five geographically diverse metropolitan areas with large AI/AN populations. Researchers will collect MRIs and genetic testing for alleles associated with ADRD in the all-races population to estimate probable ADRD based on a single exam.

The Native Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research

Principal investigator – Dedra Buchwald

Funded by the National Institute on Aging



Dr. Dedra Buchwald

Over the past year, the Native Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research (NAD RCMAR) funded four junior-level investigators – called Scholars – to conduct pilot projects focused on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias in indigenous populations across the U.S. Each investigator received guidance from three

NAD RCMAR mentors whose expertise aligned with the project content or who provided statistical guidance.

Our center has held four in-person meetings during which the Scholars updated both their peers and the NAD RCMAR faculty, all of whom are mentors to NAD RCMAR Scholars. Following presentations on the progress of their pilot projects, Scholars sought and received feedback from the assembled group. The NAD RCMAR program coordinated with the two joint University of Colorado and Washington State University programs, the Native Elders Research Center and the American Indian/Alaska Native Center of Excellence, during these in-person events to provide investigators in all three programs additional guidance from mentors with wide ranges of expertise.

In February 2020, the Scholars

wrapped up their respective pilot projects and the resulting manuscripts to move on to the grant-writing training for the last six months of their funding. On February 3-5, we held the first NAD RCMAR grant-writing workshop in Seattle with leadership from Drs. Robert Freishtat, Dedra Buchwald, and Spero Manson. We opened the workshop to Institute for Research and Education to Advance Community Health (IREACH) faculty and postdoctoral fellows and junior investigators from the University of Washington Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. It was a busy three days of learning the ins and outs of NIH grant writing.

The NAD RCMAR program is currently in the process of selecting pilot projects for our second group of Scholars. This new group will start their pilot projects in September 2020.



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