



# COMMUNITY

Center to Improve **C**hronic Disease **O**utcomes through **M**ulti-level and **M**ulti-generational approaches **U**nifying **N**ovel **I**nterventions and **T**raining for health equit**Y**

## OUR RESEARCH

### Church Trial

The CHURCH trial is community-based participatory research that aims to increase guidelines on concordant colorectal cancer (CRC) screening uptake and reduce dietary and cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk factors linked to CRC among African Americans (AA). AA communities have been disproportionately impacted and are more likely to contract and die from CRC than any other racial group in the U.S. The main reasons for these differences are a low screening rate resulting from factors such as distrust in the healthcare system, lack of access, and awareness of the services. While an increase in screening will be the most effective way to reduce CRC, a reduction in CVD can also be effective seeing that CVD can increase the risk of CRC.

To achieve the goals of the CHURCH trial, the organization has partnered with AA churches throughout Harlem. Churches are trusted institutions that are instrumental in not only promoting health care services but also in reaching a wide audience. 65%-80% of AA in urban communities attend churches. There is also an already established culture at these churches where attendees are exposed to healthcare services via Health Ministries with volunteers who provide resources such as health education and

screening. The CHURCH trial has adopted a "meet people where they are" approach where interventions are implemented into the already established church setting. As part of the intervention to address the dietary risk factors linked to CRC and CVD, the study is culturally adapting an existing, evidence-based, web-based lifestyle program called ALIVE. There is also the delivery of SBIRT (Screening with a validated instrument, Brief Intervention using Motivational Interviewing/MI, and Referral to Treatment) by CHWs, a strategy which has been proven to be effective in increasing colorectal cancer screening among groups placed at increased risk.

The CHURCH team is composed of individuals who have years of experience working to improve the health outcomes among AA's who experience disproportionate rates of CRC. The MPIs of the CHURCH trial are Olajide William, MD, MS and Sidney Hankerson, MD, MBA. Dr. Williams is a Professor and Chief of Staff of the Department of Neurology at the Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and the founding director of Columbia's Community Health Workers (CHW) Training Institute housed at Columbia University Wellness Center. He is a principal investigator of multiple NIH investigator-initiated awards, including a Center for Stroke Disparities Solutions in New York. Dr. Williams has extensive expertise in community-based research and implementation science and creates multimedia public health interventions that engage young people and families.

Dr. Hankerson is a psychiatry clinician and researcher with expertise in toxic mental health effects of Structural Racism and Discrimination (SRD). He is an Associate Professor and Vice Chair for Community Engagement in the Department of Psychiatry and Director of Mental Health Equity Research at the Institute for Health Equity Research (IHER) in the Department of Population Health Science and Policy at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. The focus of Dr. Hankerson's research is to reduce stigma about mental illness and increase access to care and he currently has grant funding from the National Institute of Mental Health to train clergy how to identify, support and refer depressed community members to mental health specialists. The CHURCH team uses a Community Health Workers (CHW) model, engaging CHWs who are trained through the Wellness Center at Columbia University. The CHWs are liaisons between the communities of interest and the health system and their work is rooted in reducing social determinants of health and obstacles to healthcare. Currently, 22 CHWs trained at the Wellness center are on the CUMC team.

