UCONN HEALTH DISPARITIES INSTITUTE

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

UCONN HEALTH DISPARITIES INSTITUTE

Hear Us

Model Being

Trust Youth

Lead - Listen

Learn - Listen

Adults Expect More From Us (Boys)

Young People Think Differently

Not Everyone Came From The Same Place

Not Everyone Is Going To The Same Place

Adults Have More Experiences

Adults Think Differently

How Are You Judging Us?

How Are You Approaching Elders?

How Are You Seeing Us?

"High School Dropout"

"Professionalism Is White"

Bring You To It

Let's Change That

There Is A Lot Of Pressure

We Have To React

How Do We Walk Away?

How Did I Get To This Point?

Quality Over Quantity

Model Vulnerability

Some People Will Listen

But Don't Care

Sometimes You Feel You're Alone

But There's A Lot Of People

Sometimes You Wear Masks For People To Listen

Being Young and Black

How Do You Change How You Express Yourself?

When Do You Change

What Feels Safe?

What Are The Signals

Spend Time With Myself

If I'm Mad I'm Quiet

I Was Always Told I'll Be Nothing

One Of Those DCF Kids

But I Rise From That

People Play Roles

Sometimes You Have To Wear Masks For People To Listen

I'm Not Afraid To Be Authentic

I Feel Comfortable

WHAT MAKES YOU?

Who Knows How You're Unique?

How Do You Feel Love?

Time

Think, Who Sets The Standard?
INTRODUCTION

Over the past year, UConn Health Disparities Institute (HDI), our institution, and our nation at large have seen many changes, some of which none of us could have imagined a year ago.

In the midst of dual pandemics – novel COVID-2019 and pre-existing structural racism – HDI’s mission and legislative mandate to eliminate health disparities and advance health equity have been elevated to a national agenda. The essential nature of our work and service to the state is clear, now more than ever, and we are proud to serve. We highlight below key accomplishments from the past year, July 2019 – June 2020.

These outcomes are a result of leveraging our 4 strategic approaches to advancing health equity and reducing health disparities:

1. Enhance health equity research, training, and innovation.
2. Deepen community engagement and cultivate cross-sector collaborations.
3. Support policy action and systems change.
4. Change data-driven and public narratives about vulnerable populations.

Since February 2020, HDI has welcomed three new staff members to our ranks:
- Willie Frazier, Research Associate I
- Emy Flores, Administrative Program Coordinator
- Valen Diaz, Projects Manager and Research Associate I

We have also added two new faculty affiliates, Dr. Kristen Cooksey Stowers from the Department of Allied Health Sciences and Dr. Loneke Blackman Carr from the Department of Nutritional Sciences.

With our team fully staffed for the first time in over a year, we reflect on our accomplishments over the past year and continue to strategize together on a path forward in our new reality.
Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in the U.S., HDI has been working tirelessly to respond to the dual pandemics of COVID-19 and racism, with calls to embed equity in our emergency response. For a detailed report of our COVID-19 response, please see the enclosed report, “Advancing Health Equity and Promoting Racial Justice during COVID-19.”

Through our COVID-19 response efforts, HDI has gained greater statewide and national visibility, which has resulted in HDI leadership being called to serve in the following ways.

- Invited by Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi to speak at closed door strategy session with the Ways & Means and Education & Labor Committees around health equity legislation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Interviewed as a public health and racial equity expert for over 20 media pieces.
- Requested to speak as a subject matter expert on policy and systems change, health equity, and racism at statewide and national forums, including but not limited to the:
  - Black and Puerto Rican Caucus
  - Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity
  - Opportunity Ministerial Health Fellowship
  - State of Connecticut Maternal and Infant Mortality Work Group on Maternity, Postpartum & Well-baby Care
  - American Psychological Association
- Published 6 op-eds and articles, including two in partnership with Health Equity Solutions, on COVID-19, health equity, and racism.

Across our COVID-19 response, our reach continues to grow and includes over:

- 147.9 million potential readers of op-ed and news articles
- 265K engagements on social media
- 45,000 viewers/participants in community conversations/presentations
- 17 media interviews
- 73 partners across and beyond UConn
- 12 presentations/webinars
For the second year, we launched Health Equity Week in partnership with Health Equity Solutions. We rapidly shifted our campaign in early April to a virtual platform, given COVID-related closures. Coming at the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Health Equity Week campaign was a jump start to building statewide momentum around addressing racial disparities and centering health equity in Connecticut’s COVID-19 pandemic response.

Our call to action was for the consistent collection and public reporting of race, ethnicity, and language data for COVID-19 testing, cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. We also recommended that standardized data collection be required across health, basic needs, and economic supports, such as Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and unemployment.

In partnership with Health Equity Solutions, we published 2 op-eds, deployed a social media campaign with original content, and shared a social media toolkit in English and Spanish.

Dr. Wizdom Powell gave the keynote address at the Ministerial Health Fellowship Town Hall on COVID-19, health disparities, and policy and systems solutions. At least 7 state legislators attended the town hall and we conducted follow-up with each legislator, including representatives from the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus.

See our webpage for our Health Equity Week 2020 Call to Action and resources page.
We leveraged our data analytics expertise and the PolicyMap tool to track COVID-19 health disparities in CT.

We are working with the CT Department of Health to provide accessible, up-to-date data by race/ethnicity, gender, and age to draw focused attention to disparate infection rates, number of tests, and mortality rates. Specifically, we created a dashboard that reports death rates per 100,000 residents by gender and race/ethnicity; COVID-19 infections in CT per 10,000 residents by town, and daily changes in COVID-19 tests in CT.

We continue to make these data and maps available for public consumption. See maps presented on the UConn HDI Website and Tableau.
In response to the racist murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Black men and women across the nation, HDI organized a series of virtual gatherings and conversations on racial profiling of Black men and women during the pandemic, facilitated by Dr. Wizdom Powell.

- We created a survey to assess priorities among our partner organizations. **Over 45 organizations received the survey and 22 organizations responded.** We convened these multi-sector organizations for discussion of the priorities that emerged from the survey. The result of this coalition engagement was an advocacy tool, the “**Racial/Ethnic Disparities in COVID-19: Priorities for Action**” report.

- In the report, these priorities are set forth by multi-sector organizations currently delivering urgently needed social, economic, spiritual support and health services to people of color. These short, mid, and long-term priorities for action are aimed at **reducing racial/ethnic disparities in COVID-19 across Connecticut.** The group of multi-sector organizations identified testing, contact tracing, hazard pay, and personal protective equipment (PPE) for people of color as priorities for reducing disparities. The group also prioritized the disaggregation of data by race/ethnicity.

HDI partnered with Amplify, Inc. and the Ministerial Health Fellowship to host a town hall and community conversation (fishbowl dialogue) series on **healing from COVID-19 and racism**, with a focus on behavioral health. Dr. Powell gave the keynote address at the town hall and facilitated the fishbowl dialogue. **4 state legislators** and the Office of Health Strategy attended these events.
**Arts and Health Equity**

**Approach - Community Engagement & Collaboration**

Arts-based strategies to advance health equity are gaining national traction and HDI is at the forefront of this trend. Our arts and health equity strategy has been amplified in local Hartford schools and through partners like the CT RISE Network. Our efforts have earned statewide visibility, with growing community partner interest and momentum.

- Our **Visualizing Health Equity curriculum** has been delivered to two schools. The curriculum was also recently transferred to an e-learning platform and will be disseminated to our partners for pilot testing.

- We are partnering with the UConn Asian and Asian American Studies Institute, Kamora’s Cultural Corner, the Afro Yaqui Music Collective, the UConn Health Center for Treatment of Developmental Trauma Disorder, and the UConn Health Center for Trauma Recovery and Juvenile Justice to host a series of community events focused on **arts and healing in the face of COVID and racism**. These events will take place in July 2020.

FY'2020 Annual Report
On November 6th, 2019, HDI presented data on the burden of medical debt in Connecticut to a Task Force (TF) appointed by Governor Ned Lamont. The TF charge was to study the impact of high deductible plans (HDHPs) on enrollees and report its findings and recommendations to the legislature. HDI presented the results of a study showing that from 2011-2016, **twenty-eight Connecticut acute care hospitals had sued over 85,000 patients to collect more than $110,000,000 in medical debt**. HDI linked the lawsuits to unaffordable deductibles of HDHPs and hospitals’ high prices as synergistic co-drivers of medical debt.

Based on the HDI data, on Nov. 12th the Hartford Business Journal published an article **singling out Danbury Hospital** as an outlier in the number of lawsuits accounting for nearly half of all the cases compared to the other 27 hospitals in the state.

Six days later another headline in the CT News Times read **“Danbury Hospital ‘changing’ policy that makes it tops for suing patients.”**

The speed with which the Danbury Hospital changed its policy suggested a high level of sensitivity on the part of Danbury Hospital administrators to the public image projected by their aggressive debt collection practices. During the following weeks HDI responded to additional media requests from a local TV station, National Public Radio and others for more information about hospital as well as medical groups, dental practices, and outpatient clinics’ lawsuit activity. HDI also presented medical debt data at several towns’ public meetings organized by Connecticut Senator Chris Murphy.
During approximately the same time period, the national press including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, ProPublica, CNBC, Washington Post, and Kaiser News, as well as some local newspapers in other states were also reporting statistics and case stories of egregious but legal hospital collection practices including large-scale patient lawsuits, garnishing of salaries, personal savings, 401K retirement, charging high-interest rates, placing liens on property and even collection agencies jailing of debtors.

In many instances news headlines resulted in swift policy reversal by hospitals, an effect seldom seen following academic publications. The short timeframe for policy changes contrasts sharply with the lengthier legislative pathway to needed reforms aimed at reducing patient’s burden of medical debt as exemplified by the HDHP TF. In light of the Danbury Hospital response to a “transparency intervention” we asked if public exposé could lead to quicker and a more generalized reduction in lawsuits by hospitals not singled out in media reports suggesting a sentinel effect.

To determine the impact of a natural experiment we call a “transparency intervention” we compared the number of active lawsuits by 28 acute care hospitals in Connecticut at two separate times, before and after a period of intense local and national media coverage of aggressive hospital debt collection practices.

Combined, Connecticut non-profit hospitals had 1,082 active lawsuits on a single day prior to the “transparency intervention” period. The total number of active cases decreased to 90, a ten-fold reduction recorded on a single day during the post-intervention period.

Public exposé of hospital lawsuits resulted in an immediate reversal of patient suing policy. This suggests that greater public access to information about standardized, understandable hospital debt collection practices including lawsuits can deter such practices. A state-wide reversal in lawsuits by hospitals would benefit disproportionately the large number of racial/ethnic minorities, non-native English speakers and the uninsured who are often the target to such lawsuits.
At HDI, we use our data analytics expertise and the mapping tool, PolicyMap, to tell the story of the data and change narratives.

**PolicyMap Success Story**

Dr. Montgomery Douglas initiated a paper publication in the Annals of Family Medicine to explain why fewer racial/ethnic minority family medicine doctors seem to report burnout. Using U.S. county-level PolicyMap diversity index (DI) data, merged into a large American Board of Family Medicine survey, Dr. Emil Coman has shown that this phenomenon is due to racial/ethnic minority family medicine doctors serving in more diverse counties. The manuscript received four positive reviewers’ suggestions, and is now in revision stage to resubmit. Once the manuscript is published (and doctor real county location are scrambled), these data will be mapped and publicized online.

**PolicyMap as a Resource for Students and Investigators**

PolicyMap has been demonstrated to:

- UConn Storrs researchers (Dr. Amy Gorin and InCHIP team).
- School of Social Work graduate/doctoral students, and
- School of Medicine students, in Dr. Kristen Ek’s clinical home class in 2019 and 2020.

Currently, it is being used as a resource to extend the findings investigated in a PhD dissertation (mentor: Dr. Amy Gorin) analyzing a weight loss intervention conducted in three Connecticut communities.
PolicyMap is featured as a central data source and visualization tool for two School of Medicine capstone projects:

- Nurudeen Osumah (PI, Dr. Wizdom Powell)
- Jessica Bertenshaw (PI, Dr. Kirsten Ek)

**Data Analytics Support**

Dr. Emil Coman is providing biostatistical support (10% effort) to UConn Health Family Medicine for:

- Family Medicine residents’ research projects (quality improvement)
- Faculty research projects (Dr. Ohri – residents exams scores; Dr. Douglas: see PolicyMap Success Story)
- Faculty community-facing project (Dr. Mansilla-Rivera – residents engaged in the Hartford schools community)
- Minority faculty development fellowship program (Dr. David Henderson)
- COVID-19 related research on FQHC patients in CT (Dr. Agresta, with ProHealth)

- Rebecca Joseph (PI Dr. Hugh Blumenfeld: hospice attitudes among African Americans)
- School of Medicine practicum project: Emily Huang (Dr. Angela Bermudez-Millan & Dr. Seth Kalichman)

Dr. Coman provides data analytics support (15% effort) to the UConn Center on Aging for Dr. Lisa Barry’s Aging Inmates Suicidal Ideation and Depression, “Aging Inside,” R01 grant, funded by NIMH. The current focus is on publications – one manuscript was recently published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* and a second manuscript led by Dr. Coman on health disparities among inmates is in progress.
Each student carried out project deliverables that aligned with HDI projects. These projects include: building social media campaigns, preparing for the State of Health Equity Among Boys and Men of Color Summit, data analysis, reporting, and recommendations for the CT Report Cards on Health Equity, preparing the Visualizing Health Equity Curriculum, building the Health Insurance Academy, support in medical debt transparency intervention effect, medical debt questionnaire development, and independent research projects.

Even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, HDI has continued fulfilling our educational mission and service to UConn students and trainees through our internship and leadership program. Over the course of this year, we worked with students every semester for their internship/practicum and leadership experience:

- Fall 2019 – 3 students
- Spring 2020 – 7 students
- Summer 2020 – 5 students

We hosted **3 seminars** in fall 2019 and **5 seminars** in spring 2020 for students focused on a variety of health equity and professional development topics. During the shelter-in-place orders, we met collectively twice a week to check in with and support students as they finished out their semesters in the midst of the pandemic.
External Services Provided

- Fishbowl Dialogue Facilitation: Dr. Powell and the HDI team provided facilitation and design services for the following partners:
  - Office of Health Strategy – two dialogues hosted in New London, CT and New Britain, CT.
  - Amplify, Inc. – one dialogue hosted virtually.

- Data Analytics Consultation: Dr. Coman provided statistical assistance to the Community Health Center, Inc./Weitzman Institute (CHC) from 2015 through February 2020 to:
  - Publish five papers on care coordination (BMC Health Services Research); pain management (Journal of Pain Research); eConsult savings (Health Affairs and American Journal of Managed Care); adverse childhood experiences (manuscript accepted for publication in Addictive Behaviors Reports)
  - Assist medical students with capstone projects at CHC (on smoking)
  - Develop process to analyze CHC data on opioid dependence treatment
    - Paper #1 is in progress.
    - The data and advanced analytics is being used to develop Dr. Coman’s K25 application, with Dr. Marwan Haddad as clinical mentor.

Active Grants

- Health Insurance Academy, $69,000, CT Health Foundation. no-cost extension ends 9/30/20
- MANHOODs, $334,385, NIH – NIDA K01, second no-cost extension approved and ends 6/30/21

Grant Submissions

- NIH –NIMHD, P50 Center for Advancing Understanding of Stress, Environmental Disparities (CAUSE) and Cardiovascular Health in Racial and Ethnic Minority Males, submitted November 2019, PI: Dr. Wizdom Powell, pending funding determination
  - If not funded, a P01 submission to NHLBI is planned for fall 2020.

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Clinical Scholars Program, submitted March 2020, PI: Dr. Rocio Chang, unfunded

- NIH P30, Claude D. Pepper Older American Independence Centers (OAICs), submitted September 2019, PI: UConn Center on Aging, unfunded

- William Casper Graustein Memorial Fund, Visualizing Health Equity Arts-Based Initiatives and Brave New Spaces, submitted in April 2019. PI: Dr. Wizdom Powell, funded $1,500, Connecticut
GRANTS AND SERVICES (CONT.)

APPROACH: RESEARCH, TRAINING, & INNOVATION

- Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA), CT PolicyMap Initiative: Building Community Capacity to Map from Evidence to Action, submitted in March 2019. PI: Dr. Wizdom Powell, unfunded

- NIH R24, Empowering community-invested researchers with practical statistical skills to increase the evidential power or substance use data, submitted January 2019. PI: Dr. Wizdom Powell, unfunded

Upcoming Submissions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUNDER</th>
<th>TIMELINE</th>
<th>PI</th>
<th>TOPICS</th>
<th>PARTNERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIH - NIDA</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
<td>Dr. Wizdom Powell</td>
<td>R34, Mindfulness based stress reduction intervention for Black emerging adult men</td>
<td>University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMONWEALTH FUND</td>
<td>July 2020</td>
<td>Dr. Wizdom Powell</td>
<td>Letter of intent - Medicaid expansion and COVID-19</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIH</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
<td>Dr. Emil Coman</td>
<td>K25 grant, opioid dependence treatment</td>
<td>Community Health Center/Weitzman Institute</td>
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<td>NIH</td>
<td>October 2020</td>
<td>UConn Center on Aging Faculty</td>
<td>P30, Pepper Center grant</td>
<td>UConn Center on Aging</td>
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<td>NIH - NHLBI</td>
<td>Fall 2020</td>
<td>Dr. Wizdom Powell</td>
<td>P01, if P50 is unfunded</td>
<td>UConn departments, UNC, RTI, community, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIH - NIDA</td>
<td>Fall 2021</td>
<td>Dr. Wizdom Powell</td>
<td>P50, substance use prevention</td>
<td>InCHIP</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABIM FOUNDATION</td>
<td>To be determined</td>
<td>Dr. Victor Villagra</td>
<td>Surprise billing</td>
<td>Hastings Institute</td>
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Given the current fiscal situation, HDI is being as proactive as possible with our budgeting for FY’21. We are budgeting for strategic priorities designed to generate revenue and return on investment. We aligned our FY’21 budget to our core structure and outlined priorities.

**FY' 21 Core Budgets = $241,235**

*Does not include salary and fringe expenses. FY'21 budget for School of Medicine operating expense funds (201122 and 201133).

The IDEAS Lab, a partnership with InCHIP as part of the State of Health Equity among Boys and Men of Color Summit, has potential to generate revenue in new grant funds for innovation that comes out of the event. The Faculty Affiliate Pilot Seed Program would also position faculty for grant funding. HDI plans to leverage this funding to grow strategically and advance our mission and legislative mandate.

We are also focused on monetizing our state level work, like fishbowl dialogue services and data analytics consultation. We are building our expertise in health equity curriculum development and e-learning platforms, with plans to offer these services and products to partners across the state and generate revenue.
### Our FY’20 spending for operational expenses is outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>FY’20 Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Salary &amp; Fringe</td>
<td>$655,610</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internal Contract Support</td>
<td>$1,031</td>
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<td>Purchased Services</td>
<td>$80,156</td>
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<td>Supplies</td>
<td>$1,435</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td>$5,339</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$743,931</strong></td>
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Dr. Wizdom Powell was awarded the FY'20 InCHIP Community-Engaged Health Research Excellence Award! This award recognizes an InCHIP-affiliated faculty member who has demonstrated excellence in health-related research conducted in collaboration with one or more community organizations and consistent with the mission of InCHIP. Excellence in community-engaged health research is defined here as work that reflects a high degree of commitment to collaboration with a community partner(s) with the goal of enhancing the respective community’s health and well-being through substantive, original, and impactful scientific contributions. Dr. Powell will receive $500 in research funds and be recognized in InCHIP’s annual report.
Publications


Powell, W., et al., Compliance and Feasibility paper. JMIR mHealth and uHealth. In progress.


Op-Eds

Our team has published a total of six op-eds and articles, including two in partnership with Health Equity Solutions, focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and health equity.

- **Powell, W.** It’s time to speak unapologetically to Black America’s emotional wounds, Medical News Today, July 4, 2020.
- **Powell, W.** This Father's Day I'm grieving with Black children who have lost their fathers to police brutality. Here’s why you should also mourn — and how to support them, Business Insider, June 21, 2020.
- **Villagra, V., & Coman, E.** There are tools to address the racial/ethnic health disparities exposed to the coronavirus, CT Mirror (CT Viewpoints), May 22, 2020
- **Everette, T., & Powell, W.** Data to promote health equity amid multiple threats of COVID-19, CT News Junkie, April 14, 2020
- **Powell, W. & Everette, T.** Why we Need to be talking about health equity during the Coronavirus pandemic, Hartford Courant, April 11, 2020

Presentations/Webinars

- **Powell, W.** A Hidden Pandemic: Mental Health, Trauma, and Racial Healing, July 8, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** Healing through COVID-19 and Racism: Bridging behavioral health gaps to build health communities, Keynote Address at Town Hall, June 24, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** How Race, Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity Impact Treatment of Trauma, June 16, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** Beneath the Masks: Men Masculinities, and COVID-19 Disparities, June 12, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** Health Inequities: Addressing the Disease Burden in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Communities, June 16, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** When We See Them: Optimizing supports for boys and their families amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, May 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** Universal Exposure, Disproportionate Impact: the Imperative of an Equity Response to Pandemic and Healthcare, May 27, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** The Stage is Set: The Imperative of Leadership Now, May 6, 2020, virtual.
- **Powell, W.** Black and Puerto Rican Caucus Tele-Health Town Hall, April 30, 2020, virtual.


Powell, W. Importance of mentors in the lives of youth who’ve experienced trauma, National Mentor Summit, January 2020

Powell, W. Let’s talk about It: Behavioral Health & Emotional Wellness in the Black Community, Panel Discussion, November 13, 2019

Powell, W., Preventing Gun Violence Research Symposium, Rutgers University, November 7, 2019

Powell, W., Chang, R., Jones, T., Gillman, J.; Smith, D., Pitter, T., Joslyn, A., Leveraging Arts-based Strategies and Creating Brave New Spaces to Address Trauma and Ignite Healing Among Boys and Men of Color (BMoC), International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies Conference, November 2019

Powell, W., Visualizing Health Equity among Boys and Men of Color: Creating Brave New Spaces for Health Equity Dialogue and Action, American Public Health Association Conference, November 2019

Powell, W. Addressing Behavioral Health Issues for Boys and Men and Effectively Using Men’s Health Data to Identify and Address Men’s Health Issues/Connecticut State Example (2 presentations), National Healthy Start Association Summit on Fatherhood and the Health and Wellness of Boys and Men, October 20, 2019

Powell, W. Speak to the Wounds: Unpacking Racial Trauma and Developing Healing-Centered Responses for Boys and Men of Color, Kennedy Krieger Institute Keynote Address, October 2019

Powell, W. Masculinity, medical mistrust, and health help-seeking among African American Men: Implications for Cancer Disparities, CT Cancer Symposium, September 19, 2019

Powell, W. Moving Fathers and Young Men Forward: Against a Climate of Racism, White Supremacy, and Policies that are Attacking the Black and Brown Community, Panelist, Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Washington DC, September 2019

Powell, W. Breath, Eyes, Memory: Optimizing emotional well-being among boys and men of color, Hofstra University, September 2019

Powell, W. Rutgers University School of Social Work presentation, September 2019

Powell, W. American Psychological Association Announcement of Presidential 2020 Theme and Presidential Brain Trust - Holding Space for Boys and Men of Color, Fall 2019

Powell, W. Systemic and community oriented solutions, CT Against Gun Violence Symposium, Fall 2019

Powell, W. Wellness Symposium: Building Bridges for Youth Wellbeing, July 26, 2019

Villagra, V. Connecticut Maternal Mortality Review Committee, April 2020: "COVID-19 and Social Determinants of Health"

Villagra, V. CT Commission of Human Rights and Opportunity, August 2019: High Deductible Plans The End-User Perspective"

Villagra, V. High Deductible Health Plan Task Force, November 2019: "High Deductible Plans: A Product Assessment from the Consumer Perspective"

Villagra, V. Connecticut Primary Care Coalition, June 2019: “Health Insurance Literacy - The Gateway to Healthcare”

Villagra, V. Connecticut Health Foundation, November 6, 2019: "Health Equity in Connecticut What Do High Deductible Plans Have to Do with It?"
Villagra, V., Several Town Hall meetings with Senator Chris Murphy, Aug-Dec. 2019: “The Medical Debt Crisis in Connecticut"

Villagra, V., Panelist, Health Equity in CT Conference by CT Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities, August 6, 2019


Chang, R., Leveraging Arts-based Strategies and Creating Brave new Spaces to Address Trauma and Ignite Healing among boys and men of Color (BMoC). 2019. Boston, MA.

Coman, E., Joslyn, A., Smith, D., Boland. Research Connections Conference, Fall 2019

Smith, D., My Art, My Voice, My Community, My Change: Health Equity and Social Justice Art Curriculum for Youth of Color, American Public Health Association Conference, November 2019

Trainings and Teachings

Chang, R. 2020 Think Trauma Curriculum, Carlos Albizu University – Puerto Rico (16 hours)

Chang, R. 2019 TARGET training, Carlos Albizu University – Puerto Rico (16 hours)

Chang, R. 2019 Think Trauma Curriculum, Capital Community College (2 hours)

Chang, R. 2020 & 2019 Positive Psychology Class to Psychiatry residents (6 hours)

Chang, R. 2020 & 2019 Medical Spanish (15 hours)

Chang, R. 2019 The intersection among domestic violence, trauma and mental health, CT Coalition against Domestic Violence (16 hours)

Chang, R. 2020 Developmental Trauma and its effects in the community, University of Central Caribe, Puerto Rico (6 hours)

Media Interviews and Coverage

Our team has been actively engaging with the public through multiple media outlets, including newspapers and podcasts. Please see below for a list of media interviews and coverage of our work that resulted in published pieces.

The federal government will pay COVID-19 bills for Connecticut’s uninsured, but do they know that?, CT Mirror, July 9, 2020

Racism Is a Health Crisis. Why Aren’t We Treating It Like One?, Healthline, June 23, 2020

Race is not the reason Black Americans have a higher risk of dying from the coronavirus. It’s racism, Business Insider, June 19, 2020

White Shame: How To Convert Guilt into Action, Inverse, June 17, 2020

Amid the Protests and pandemic, a new call for health equity reform, CT Mirror, June 15, 2020

Hacen un Nuevo Llamado a la Reforma de Equidad en Salud en Connecticut, Identidad Latina, June 15, 2020

Depression and anxiety spiked among black Americans after George Floyd’s death, The Washington Post, June 13, 2020

Also appeared in Anchorage News; UConn Today; Fox DC; National Collaborative; News Break


Doctors Clarify Why Racism Against Black Americans is a Public Health Crisis, Inverse, June 3, 2020
- Your Anger is Healthy (Especially Right Now), According to A Psychologist, Well and Good, June 2, 2020
- Experts: Disparities in Hispanic and black coronavirus death rates worse than previously reported, CT Mirror & CT Post, May 29, 2020
  - Also appeared in Meriden Record-Journal, Waterbury Republican American
- Employees in Some Industries Face Risking COVID-19 Or Losing Their Jobs and Benefits, KCUR, Kansas Public Radio, May 22, 2020
- Frustration growing in minority communities over government’s response to pandemic, The CT Mirror, May 12, 2020
- As coronavirus testing expands to Hartford's vulnerable communities, advocates see chance to mend decades of mistrust, Hartford Courant, May 7, 2020
- Connecticut is battling coronavirus as it moves across the state, but for Hartford and Bridgeport, COVID-19 fight brings added dangers, Hartford Courant, April 19, 2020
- Pandemic exposes stark health disparities generations in the making, Connecticut Health-I-Team, April 16, 2020
  - Also appeared in CT Mirror
- Black and Latino residents hit particular hard by COVID-19 in Connecticut, as experts fear disparities well widen, The Hartford Courant, April 8, 2020
- UConn researchers find blacks are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, CT News Junkie, April 8, 2020
- Let’s focus on Health Equity NOT Health Disparities, Raising Equity Podcast with Dr. Kira Banks, April 24, 2020, Aired on Facebook, Twitter, Spotify, Apple Podcast
- Preliminary Data Raise Questions about Coronavirus Risks for Connecticut Residents of Color, Connecticut Public Radio, April 5, 2020
- Medical Debt Could Get You Sued, CT NBC, February 18, 2020
- Danbury Hospital could get grilled over suing patients, CT Insider, November 25, 2019
- Why No One Should Have to “Take It Like a Man”, Psychology Today, November 22, 2019
- Danbury Hospital is Connecticut’s Most Litigious: Report, The Patch, November 17, 2019
- Connecticut hospital known for suing patients reviews its debt-collection policies, Becker’s Hospital Review, November 12, 2019
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