

BROWN APPOINTED TO FLINT'S COMMUNITY ETHICS REVIEW BOARD

Bob Brown, Associate Director: CCED

Bob Brown, Associate Director, has been appointed to the Community Ethics Review Board (CERB) of the Flint Community-Based Organization Partners (CBOP). The purpose of CBOP is to provide a structure and forum through which Community-Based Organizations can exchange ideas, offer services, and develop programs in the interest of the African-American Community and the community-at-large.



CBOP works in cooperation and collaboration with, to support, develop, and sponsor community-based welfare projects and programs, that will serve the interest of the community. CBOP also advocates for and engages in activities of community-based participatory research, community health, social planning, social welfare, interest of individuals, health departments, higher education institutions, agencies, and other groups in or serving “The Community.”

CBOP is the “home” of the Community Ethics Review Board (CERB). The purpose of the CERB is to serve as a safety net to ensure that research conducted in the community is ethically safe, morally sound, and provides equal benefit to the community.

The CERB reviews research projects to make sure that:

- The community is engaged and informed,
- It will benefit from said research,
- Projects are sensitive to the community’s culture and needs,
- Needs and concerns about research are heard and addressed,
- A feedback loop is provided where research results will be disseminated to the community for its use and its benefit, and
- The community is educated about research.

For example, following are two submitted studies from Michigan State University that were recently approved by the CERB: 1) Food and Eating in Teens Study, and 2) Culturally Targeted Messaging and Parental Receptivity to HPV.

FOOD AND EATING IN TEENS STUDY

Nearly 1 in 4 children in Genesee County (23.7%) experienced food insecurity in 2022. Food insecurity is associated with elevated risk of adolescent obesity in the United States, and adolescent obesity is associated with numerous adverse physical and mental health consequences in adolescence and increased morbidity and premature mortality in adulthood. Evidence suggests that reducing food insecurity itself is likely necessary, but not sufficient, for preventing subsequent excess weight gain in adolescents affected by food insecurity. Therefore, understanding why food insecurity leads to excess risk for adolescent obesity is necessary to guide intervention development.

A potential mechanism to explain this excess risk is binge eating, a relatively common behavior in adolescents. Food insecurity has been established as a risk factor for binge eating and binge eating has been established as a risk factor for adolescent obesity in the general population, but binge eating has not yet been examined as a risk factor for obesity specifically in the context of food insecurity. Considering that periods of undereating due to food scarcity in food-insecure households could potentially offset the contribution of binge eating to obesity risk, there is a need to clarify the role of binge eating in relation to food insecurity and adolescent weight. The overall objective in the proposed project is to guide the development of a community intervention in Flint to improve food security and promote healthy weight among adolescents at risk for food insecurity. To inform such an intervention, the PI will work with a youth advisory board to achieve the aims of the proposed project, which are to: (1) quantify the extent to which binge eating mediates the longitudinal association between food insecurity and weight gain during adolescence in 175 adolescents followed for an 18 month longitudinal study and (2) assess perceived acceptability of potential interventions in community settings to improve food security and prevent excess weight gain among adolescents at risk for food insecurity.

CULTURALLY TARGETED MESSAGING AND PARENTAL RECEPTIVITY TO THE HUMAN PAPILLOMAVIRUS VACCINE

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer among women worldwide. Cervical cancer disproportionately affects African American women, who have higher incidence and mortality rates than White women. Nearly all cervical cancer is caused by HPV, a viral infection that can be transmitted through sexual contact. HPV vaccination can provide long-lasting protection against HPV and, consequently, reduce risk for cervical cancer and other negative health outcomes associated with high-risk HPV. The 1 HPV vaccine is most effective when administered prior to becoming sexually active around 11- 12 years of age.

However, and despite widespread availability, only 59% of children are fully vaccinated for HPV. Health promotion strategies aimed at increasing HPV vaccine uptake are therefore urgently needed. Underlying cervical cancer disparities, African American girls are less likely to have completed the HPV vaccination series than Whites. Although structural and sociodemographic factors contribute to disparities in vaccine uptake, an additional yet underappreciated psychosocial barrier for African American parents of HPV vaccine-eligible children are racism-related cognitions and emotions.

Developing culturally effective health communication strategies to mitigate adverse impacts of racism-related cognition and increase parental receptivity to the HPV vaccine is therefore vital to reducing cervical cancer disparities among African Americans. The proposed research will develop and initially evaluate culturally targeted messaging to better promote receptivity to the HPV vaccine among African American parents. Parents of White and African American female children will be recruited from Flint, Michigan, to participate in an online educational module about cervical cancer risks and HPV vaccination. Half of African American participants will also receive culturally targeted messaging about the HPV vaccine and cervical cancer, and we will evaluate the impact of educational materials and targeted messaging on HPV vaccination receptivity. The long-term goal is to address racial disparities in cervical cancer by increasing HPV vaccine rates among African Americans. The immediate objective is to promote equity in parental receptivity to the HPV vaccine through the use of culturally targeted health messaging. The central hypothesis is that African American parents will have greater receptivity to the HPV vaccine after receiving a culturally targeted message, relative to an education-only condition.

Brown is currently serving a two-year term on the CERB.

