

**Creating Strong Partnerships in the African American Community through Honest and Interactive Educational Events to SUPPORT and EMPOWER**

Representation of older African Americans (AAs) in research on prevention and treatment of Alzheimer's disease (AD) is dismal, with estimates near 5% in NIH-funded AD trials. Traditional academic recruitment approaches often involve print advertising and impersonal messaging. This approach cannot address historic events that damaged trust and perceptions of medical research. The science of community engagement in underserved communities emphasizes the importance of strong community partnerships that evolve from genuine, enduring, and mutually beneficial face-to-face interactions. We have developed a targeted Lunch~n~Learn 3-part series for faith-based groups with primarily AA membership. The series includes interactive discussions about normal and pathological cognitive aging; the elephant in the room regarding past harmful medical research practices, changes in these practices and the importance of research to ensure applicability to all; and the impact of caregiving on the caregiver and his/her community. Since April 2016, 389 older adults have attended one of our 17 Lunch~n~Learn programs conducted in collaboration with 8 large area churches. Of these, 102 AA adults have inquired about research opportunities (26%). This evolving partnership has also led to other collaborations, including the city-wide coalition of ministers, the Urban League, and the Black Repertory Theatre for which we provided audience Talk Backs following each performance of a nationally acclaimed play about AD. Successful community engagement requires acknowledgement of atrocities of the past and the development of a mutually beneficial relationships that provide support and foster empowerment. Recruitment approaches that fail to address these needs are at high risk of failure.