

A Publication Of
CHEER:
The Consortium For
Health Education,
Economic
Empowerment
and Research

A NCMHD Exploratory Center of
Excellence in Health Disparities

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on Minority Health and Health
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Public Health
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Memphis and Shelby County
Health Department



Greetings from the Executive Director

We are pleased to present the second issue of our CHEERLeader newsletter. This quarterly publication is designed to inform you about local and national issues on health disparities. We hope to reach a wide audience of readers including community residents, researchers, community organizers and public officials.

Since our last newsletter, CHEER has been actively engaged in promoting a better understanding of health disparities and informing the community of our existence. We have sponsored two community seminars celebrating Minority Health Month in April and one seminar in May.

UTHSC Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff Ken Brown, JD, MPA, PhD, along with Brandi Franklin, MBA, PhD, CHEER project manager, and I were interviewed on "The Bev Johnson Show," a talk radio program that airs daily on *AM-WDIA 1070*. Bev's listeners called in to discuss various issues about health disparities and health strategies that have been passed down through generations.

On the national front, in late March, Memphis was designated the hunger capital of the United States by the Food Research Action Center. Data showed that a larger percentage of people are going hungry in Memphis than in other metropolitan cities in the nation. About 26 percent of Memphians said that at least one time in the past 12 months, they didn't have enough money for food. CHEER has decided to join the movement to address this concern. Watch for announcements over the next few months about a CHEER conference on hunger, food availability, food culture and health disparities. We are planning a community dialogue, and your presence is essential.

We hope you will find our second issue of the CHEERLeader informative and useful. CHEER serves as a Memphis and Shelby County resource for transforming health disparities into health possibilities.

Wishing you the best,

Shelley I. White-Means

Shelley I. White-Means, PhD
Executive Director, CHEER



Dr. Shelley White-Means

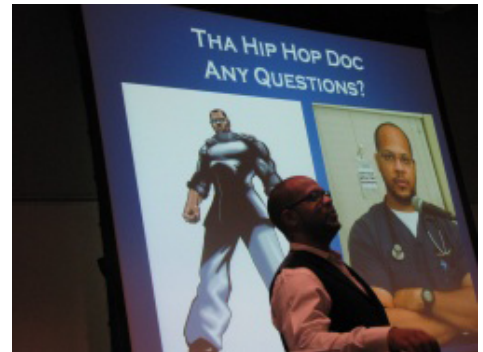
Focus on National Minority Health Month

In conjunction with the UTHSC Black Graduate Student Association, CHEER hosted a symposium that featured Rani Whitfield, MD, a board-certified family physician in Baton Rouge, La., committed to advancing innovative methods for improving minority health.

Dr. Whitfield, also known as “Tha Hip Hop Doc,” presented “H2D and Health Disparities,” a discussion on how he uses hip hop music to reach minority citizens for the purpose of explaining health disparities and communicating culturally appropriate health messages.

CHEER also presented, “The Mayor’s View on The Med and Health Disparities,” a seminar led by Joe Ford, interim mayor of Shelby County, Tenn. Mayor Ford discussed his view of the funding challenges at the Regional Medical Center at Memphis.

For more information, contact Brandi Franklin, PhD, CHEER project manager, at (901) 448-1982. For more information about CHEER, visit <http://www.uthsc.edu/CHEER>.



On Friday, April 23, Rani Whitfield, MD, nationally known by his musical name, “Tha Hip Hop Doc” or “H2D,” visited UTHSC to discuss his efforts to address health disparities.

Health Care Reform: What’s In It For Me?

Since the health care reform bill was signed into law in March, many Americans are wondering how it will be of personal benefit. To address this question, the CHEER program has summarized a few of the most important aspects of the bill.

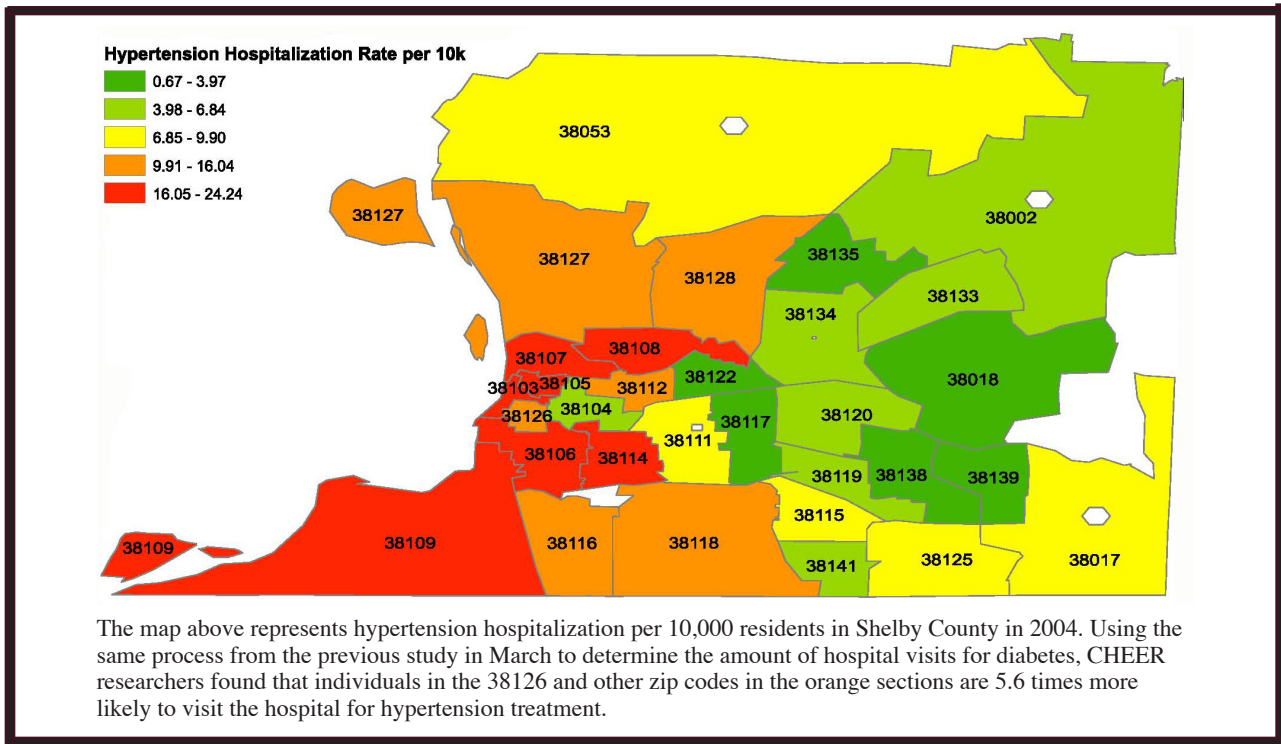
The health reform bill has three main objectives -- to make health care more accessible, affordable and equitable. It will provide insurance to many Americans who were previously uninsured, create additional benefits for those currently insured, and address inequalities in our current health care system.

In addition, many of the following provisions will begin within this first year. Millions of uninsured Americans will gain insurance coverage. Americans with coverage will gain tax credits, subsidies, and limits on out-of-pocket expenses. Medicaid limits will be expanded to help more low-income families. Also, health insurance companies will be more tightly regulated, eliminating unjustified premium increases and denials of coverage for persons with pre-existing conditions.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of health reform is its emphasis on reducing racial/ethnic health disparities. The causes of disparities can range from societal issues like poverty, racism and unhealthy environments, to health system factors such as lack of health insurance, cultural barriers and limited access to health care facilities.

If you have questions regarding the law, the CHEER office may assist you. Please feel free to contact us at (901) 448-1985.

GIS Maps To Study Hypertension



CHEER recently used GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping to determine that individuals in the 38126 zip code are highly likely to access a hospital for hypertension. In fact, results show that they are 5.6 times more likely than other Shelby County residents to visit a hospital for care.

The GIS maps provide targeted information about health, crime, business and traffic. They offer deeper understanding to help create the necessary steps to address the results.

Using the information from GIS, CHEER will offer insight on how residents of the 38126 zip code and the community can sustain steady treatment that will decrease the amount of hospital visits in the area.

If you currently have hypertension, CHEER experts suggest that you take your blood pressure medicine as your doctor prescribes, increase your physical activity (try walking for 30 minutes, three times a week), and reduce the amount of salt you eat.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, is a condition that can be controlled by a primary care physician, and if properly treated, should not lead to a hospital visit. Hypertension becomes a problem when the blood pressure in the arteries is too high. It is usually measured with two numbers -- the systolic pressure (the number on top) and the diastolic pressure (the number on bottom). If you continually have blood pressure readings that are higher than 140 systolic pressure or higher than 90 diastolic pressure, you have high blood pressure.

For more information on GIS mapping and hypertension or diabetes results in the 38126 zip code, please contact CHEER at (901) 448-1985.



CHEER Opening, Meaningful Beginning



**Scenes from CHEER
Open House**

The CHEER staff recently welcomed visitors to help celebrate their open house. Clockwise from top left corner: Cyril Chang, PhD, professor of economics and director of the Methodist Le Bonheur Center for Health Care Economics and Reverend Kenneth Robinson, MD, Shelby County's health officer; Venora Petty, CHEER coordinator; Shelley White-Means, PhD (far left), speaks with guests; Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief of Staff Ken Brown, JD, MPA, PHD (right) with CHEER staff (from right) Brandi Franklin, PhD, Rita Geier, PhD, Shelley White-Means, PhD, Shanell McGoy and Lawrence Brown; Lawrence Brown speaks with guests about GIS mapping.

As guests and staff members gathered to celebrate the opening of CHEER on the AUTHSC campus on May 14, it was evident that a major project that will change the face of health disparities research had begun.

The event was launched with a seminar, "Preventing Infant Mortality: The Blues Project," presented by Kimberly Lamar, PhD. Dr. Lamar described ongoing research conducted to improve birth outcomes in Memphis. Later that day, members of the CHEER team provided tours of the CHEER office and discussed the vision and mission guiding their research efforts.

More than 50 people toured the new facility and were excited to hear about new opportunities that address health disparities in the Memphis and Mississippi Delta region. In addition, individuals from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, the Memphis and Shelby County Health Department, and Memphis Housing Authority were present to celebrate the center's opening.

Through a grant awarded from the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD), CHEER is examining health disparities in connection with race and other social determinants of health.

CHEER would like to thank all the individuals who supported its successful open house. CHEER plans to hold regular events to engage the community in seminars on health disparities and discussions on innovative approaches to designing and implementing interventions that target gaps in the quality of health and health care in various communities throughout Memphis and Shelby County.

For more information, please visit <http://www.uthsc.edu/CHEER>.

A NCMHD Exploratory Center of Excellence in Health Disparities

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