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\$4.8 Million Awarded to Pitt's Center for Minority Health to Fund Health Disparities Research

PITTSBURGH, November 8, 2007 – The [Center for Minority Health](#) (CMH) in the [Graduate School of Public Health](#) (GSPH) at the University of Pittsburgh has been awarded a five-year, \$4.8 million grant to establish a Research Center of Excellence in Minority Health Disparities by the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities, a part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The new multi-year grant positions CMH as a national center of excellence in translating evidence-based research into community-based interventions designed to prevent disease and promote health in Pittsburgh's African-American community.

"This NIH funding will help our efforts to improve the translation of scientific findings into interventions that contribute to the elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities," said Stephen B. Thomas, Ph.D., CMH director and the grant's principal investigator.

The Research Center of Excellence in Minority Health Disparities will embed rigorous scientific research within the Healthy Black Family Project, a health promotion and disease prevention program that has enrolled more than 6,000 participants in the Pittsburgh area in a lifestyle behavior-change intervention designed to increase physical activity, improve nutrition, reduce stress and provide access to a medical home. The Healthy Black Family Project is currently headquartered in East Liberty, with a satellite office in Wilkinsburg, and is expanding to the Hill District and North Side to bring program activities closer to where

Contact Person

[Amy Dugas Rose](#)

Media Coordinator

Telephone: 412-647-3555

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Our Experts



[Stephen B. Thomas, Ph.D.](#)

[Biography](#)

people live, work, play and worship.

“Public health faces many challenges, but there is no greater challenge than the elimination of health disparities. Eliminating disparities is a daunting task that will require more than just good intentions. Excellent science, visionary leadership and a deep moral commitment are required to bring about change. This NIH award confirms that the CMH has the leadership needed to bring exactly these strengths to the GSPH, the university, the region at large and the nation,” said Donald S. Burke, M.D., GSPH dean and the Jonas Salk Chair in Global Health at Pitt.

“The NIH was impressed with the inclusion of representatives from African-American organizations, local foundation leaders, the CMH Community Research Advisory Board and people from the community, as members of the leadership team in the new center,” said Dr. Thomas, who also is the Philip Hallen Professor of Community Health and Social Justice at GSPH. “We have demonstrated how community partnerships must be more than ‘lip service’ in grant applications and that it is feasible to develop and sustain a true partnership which benefits the African-American community and the community of academic research scientists.”

As part of the new center, Charles Reynolds III, M.D., director of the Late Life Mood Disorders Center in the department of psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, will serve as principal investigator of a study designed to prevent depression through the use of problem solving therapy (PST). PST is a behavioral treatment that teaches problem-solving orientation and skills. It teaches people to accept problems as a normal part of life, enhances belief in one's ability to solve them, develops active coping skills and helps people plan daily pleasurable activities to combat worsening of mood and decreased activity.

“The Healthy Black Family staff will be trained in the PST method to increase their capacity to identify and avert early signs of depression, a condition commonly associated with people who also suffer from diabetes and cardiovascular disease,” said Dr. Reynolds.

The mission of the National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities is to promote minority health and to lead, coordinate, support and assist the NIH effort to reduce and ultimately eliminate health disparities.

Established in 1994 with a grant from the R.K. Mellon Foundation, the Center for Minority Health is committed to translating evidence-based research into community-based interventions and innovative outreach practices. The CMH provides the infrastructure for addressing health issues among ethnic and racial minorities and other vulnerable and underserved populations. For more information, visit <http://www.cmh.pitt.edu>.

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