Take charge of your health today. Be informed. Be involved.

Research and Health Equity

This month, the "Take Charge of Your Health Today" series will focus on research and why equity in research participation is important. Jennifer R. Jones, MPH, CTSI community engagement senior coordinator, and Esther L. Bush, president and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, shared ideas on this topic.

Dr. Bush: Good afternoon, Ms. Bush. I hope your October is treating you well. I'm really glad that we can spend some time today talking about research and health equity—topics that are relevant in research and, especially, how important it is that current research is representative of all diversities.

JJ: Yes, Jennifer, I am so passionate about this topic. The Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh has been partnering with CTSI for more than 10 years now. In that time, CTSI leaders like Dr. Steve Resis and my colleague Elizabeth Miller have been extremely proud of the mutual trust and respect our organizations have built. We look forward to what we'll continue to do together. I'm proud to say that our Urban League supports research and research participation, and that we all work together to create "health-informed community." Let's talk about that for a minute. That's the main part of our mission and work together. What does a "research-informed community" mean to you?

EB: To me, it means that all of our communities understand what health research done well looks like—that our communities understand the rigorous process that has to be done to make certain that risks are minimized for participants. It means that our communities are empowered to ask questions about research they may be interested in and to listen thoughtfully to learn how research has progressed over the years. It also means that the community about research. CTSI participate in health events across the city to talk about Pitt+Me, our CTSI research registry. We will continue to reach out to our community members to ask questions and to know that research is always voluntary. We want people to understand the process of informed consent—to identify where to go to find studies that may be beneficial for them or their families. People also need to recognize that African Americans are underrepresented in health data.

EB: Underrepresentation is something I know we can improve. Historically, African Americans, and other underrepresented groups, have had good reasons not to want to participate in medical research. But it's important to me that more than white men are represented in research health studies. I want Black women to tell their stories, the elderly and the disabled—all vulnerable groups—to be represented in research. Only then will those who treat us truly know that they are providing the best possible care for each of us.

JJ: Providing the best possible care for each person is what we call "precision medicine," which is our November health topic. We'll explore all those points in greater detail in just a few weeks. Thank you for your openness and honesty, Ms. Bush. I always appreciate your time.

The University of Pittsburgh + Me (Pitt+Me) is a program of the University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) that engages researchers, patients and volunteers from the Greater Pittsburgh community as partners in research. Research plays an important role in advancing science and improving health for future generations. Conducting research requires participants of all backgrounds, races and gender orientation to move health forward. CTSI is working hard to accelerate discoveries that improve health.

To learn more about Pitt+Me and how to get involved in research studies, please visit www.pittplusme.org.

October Theme: "Gender and Equity in Research and Health Participation"

Visit the Urban League Health Equity Research Office

The purpose of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh Health Equity Office (HEO) is to promote health awareness and health equity for the African American and other traditionally underserved communities. This is done through education, awareness and empowerment, developing research and practice partnerships, research promotion and health advisory for communities of color in the region.

HEO partners with the University of Pittsburgh Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) and the Carlow University School of Nursing to help move health equity, Enthia Kirkwood, the HEO's associate director, coordinates with her staff members, clients and community organizations to ensure that research "Lunch & Learn"s are also held monthly and are open to the public.

Pitt+Me®—Improving Health Through Research

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