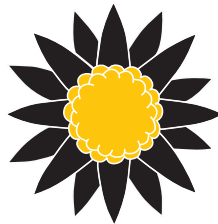


The HBEC encourages older African Americans to participate in research with the goal of addressing health disparities



# HEALTHIER BLACK ELDERS CENTER

Spring 2021

Connecting Older Adults to Research



## How You Can Help

Research is critical to understanding why African Americans are at much higher risk of developing certain diseases, and why these diseases have a greater impact on their health and longevity. If you agree to be part of the Participant Resource Pool (PRP), we guarantee that:

- The research projects meet the highest quality federal, state and university standards.

- Your information will be handled with the strictest confidence.

- You will be considered for research that is of interest to you.

- You have the right to decline a research project for any reason at any time.

If interested, contact HBEC Program Coordinator at 313-664-2604

The Healthier Black Elders Center is part of the Michigan State University, University of Michigan and Wayne State University Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research: A National Institute on Aging Grant Program



## How Do Covid-19 Vaccines Work in the Body?

by Sean Knurek

First, let's define some key terms that help explain how these new vaccines work.

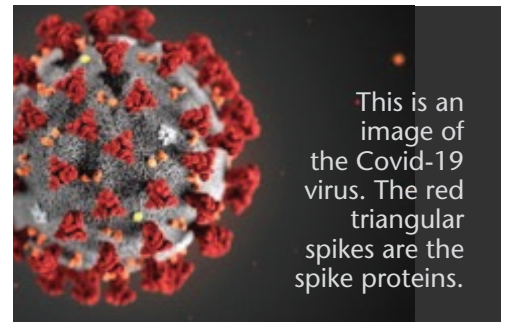
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a **vaccine** is something that "stimulates the body to create antibodies like you were exposed to a disease."

The CDC describes **antibodies** as being "proteins that help fight off infections and can provide protection against getting that disease again. Antibodies are disease specific."

An **antigen**, as defined by the National Cancer Institute, is "any substance that causes the body to make an immune response against that substance, including toxins, chemicals, bacteria, viruses, or other substances that came from outside the body."

Vaccines prior to Covid-19 were either attenuated (alive but weakened) or deactivated forms of antigens. Simply, older vaccines, like the measles or chicken pox vaccine, would introduce weakened antigens into the body that the body would then fight off. In learning how to fight off the antigen, the human body would then create antibodies that would protect the body from future re-infection by that same antigen.

Because Covid-19 infection can be so severe, they did not want to risk put-



This is an image of the Covid-19 virus. The red triangular spikes are the spike proteins.

ting a weak or deactivated Covid-19 virus in a vaccine. Vaccine researchers turned to a newer technology that would not risk a recipient becoming infected with Covid-19. The Covid-19 vaccines currently offered by Pfizer and Moderna are the first widely released vaccines that use messenger RNA (mRNA) technology. Moderna, states that mRNA is "a blueprint for creating a protein." Scientists identified a key protein for this – the spike protein. The image above shows what the Covid-19 spike protein looks like. These spikes are important because they allow the virus to invade our human cell structure without causing disease.

When someone is diagnosed with Covid-19, it means that the virus (an antigen) has entered our cells, and before our immune system can eliminate the virus, Covid-19 has hijacked the regular function of our human cells.

See HBEC Response to Covid Page 2

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This can cause damage or death to the cell. More importantly, the infected person’s cells are reprogrammed so that Covid-19 is then copied and produced in the body. This process happens repeatedly until the virus can no longer reproduce—either through the heroics of our immune system, or by death of the person infected.

If you have heard the term “viral load,” that refers to the total amount of virus in a test sample. When a person has a high enough viral load, it means that Covid-19 is multiplying in the body, and that person will then test positive for Covid-19.

The mRNA vaccine is clever. Instead of introducing the entire virus (alive or weakened), researchers were able to copy the spike protein mRNA (protein blueprint) from Covid-19. By injecting the blueprints for this specific spike protein (the new Covid-19 mRNA vaccine), the body has time to determine how to destroy the spike protein without being threatened by the virus

as a whole. The body will then create antibodies that will attack this invading spike protein later down the line if it identifies it again from being exposed to Covid-19.

As a result, someone who has received both the first and second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccine should have about a 95% chance of being protected from Covid-19. Why? It’s locked out of the cell, not unlike if you

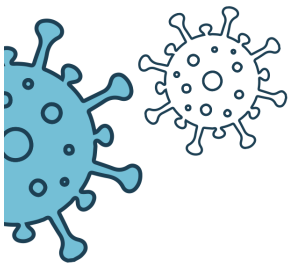
locked your front door while accidentally leaving your keys inside. The cells of someone who received a vaccine would now have been trained (has the antibodies) to destroy Covid-19’s spike protein. That means the virus has lost its key to enter human cells. When the virus cannot take over cells, it cannot reproduce. If Covid-19 can’t reproduce, it stops being a threat to that person.

If you would like more information on the Covid-19 vaccine, we recommend:

- Speaking with your primary care physician
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- State of Michigan: <https://www.michigan.gov/coronavirus/>
- The City of Detroit Health Department: [detroitmi.gov/departments/detroit-health-department](http://detroitmi.gov/departments/detroit-health-department)
- Genesee County Health Department: <http://www.gchd.us/coronavirus/>

# Preliminary COVID-19 Vaccination Timeline

Dates are estimated and expected to change based on vaccine availability



Anyone age 16 or older

All remaining essential workers

Other essential frontline workers and people age 16-64 years with a health condition that puts them at high risk for serious COVID-19 complications

Michiganders age 65 and older, frontline essential workers, child care and pre-K through high school staff, and congregate care facilities

Health care workers and long term care residents and staff

Dec. | Jan. | Feb. | March | April | May | June | July | Aug. | Sept. |



To find a vaccine and schedule an appointment, visit [Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine](http://Michigan.gov/COVIDvaccine).



## New Leadership for MCUAAAR

Congratulations to Dr. Robert Taylor who has been named principal investigator of the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR).



Dr. Taylor is the Harold R. Johnson Endowed Professor of Social Work at the University of Michigan and has been affiliated with MCUAAAR since its founding in 1997. Dr. Taylor takes over from Dr. James Jackson, a close colleague and friend. Dr. Jackson, the U-M's visionary leader of MCUAAAR since its inception and director of the Institute for Social Research, passed away last year.

Dr. Taylor has received numerous awards throughout his career, many for his exceptional mentoring and training of minority scholars and is regarded as a pioneer in the field of African American aging research. He has led multiple research studies and projects on informal social support networks (such as family, friends and church members), the role of religion, and the mental health of adult and elderly Black Americans. Leadership of MCUAAAR is shared between Dr. Taylor at the U-M, Dr. Peter Lichtenberg at the Institute of Gerontology at Wayne State University, and Dr. Joan Ilardo at the College of Human Medicine at Michigan State University.

Dear HBEC Members,

It is with deep sadness that I report that Dr. James Jackson died peacefully last August after an incredibly courageous battle with Stage IV pancreatic cancer. He was the epitome of a Cancer Survivor, doing what he loved most – family and work – until the very end of his life.

I wanted to share a little of what James gave to me and to our Institute of Gerontology. When I took over as the acting director of the IOG in 1998, James was the chair of our national steering committee. Not only did he welcome me into the co-director role of MCUAAAR but also was a phenomenal advisor and great supporter of our IOG and of me to the senior leadership of Wayne State. He remained chair of our steering committee for five years and was profoundly instrumental in enhancing our status at Wayne State.

James and I enjoyed a remarkable partnership with the MCUAAAR and the HBEC. Although he was a national and international leader in the field, he welcomed me as a full partner, from the goals of the grant to the oversight of the budget. It was remarkable really for someone of James' stature to be so open to such an equal partnership between Wayne and Michigan (and then MSU as of 2018). James was thrilled with the work of the HBEC CAB members and staff and really was dedicated to sharing important research information with the general public. His warmth and caring about us all was another remarkable quality.

The thing I loved most was listening to James--either when he presented at the national RCMAR meeting or other national meetings or advised our MCUAAAR scientists at our monthly meetings. James truly was the leader nationally of the RCMAR program (of which MCUAAAR is one). He was a brilliant scholar, thinker and strategist. When I began working in financial decision-making, I sought out James' advice and, of course, he gave me the same kind of exceptional wisdom as he did his students and junior colleagues.

What a privilege to know and work with James. He was truly a great man "from Inkster," as he liked to remind us.

Best,

Peter A. Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP  
 Director, Institute of Gerontology & Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute,  
 Distinguished University Service Professor, Professor of Psychology  
 Wayne State University





# Celebrating the Life and Work of Dr. James Jackson

James S. Jackson, PhD, died last year at age 76 after a long battle with pancreatic cancer. His wife and daughters were at his side. Dr. Jackson was the University of Michigan's Daniel Katz Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of Psychology. In 1997, he started the Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR). Under his leadership, the Healthier Black Elders Center was also created and continues to thrive today. His contributions to academia, research, and the health of aging African Americans are broad and incredibly significant. Due to his multitude of impressive accomplishments, his obituary appeared in the New York Times. During his career, he crossed disciplinary lines including sociology, psychology, political science, and public health.

Dr. Jackson did much for the world of aging and research.

He founded the Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan in 1976. He completed the National Survey of Black Americans study from 1977-1980. He was appointed by President Obama to the National Science Board of the National Science Foundation. Dr. Jackson also served on the NIH National Advisory Council on Minority Health and Health Disparities, the NSF National Science Board, the Consortium of Social Science Associations, and the NIH Advisory Committee.

Dr. Jackson received numerous

meritorious honors and awards. He was elected to the National Academy of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences due to his academic contributions. He received the U-M President's Award for National and State Leadership, the APA Distinguished Scientific Award for the Applications of Psychology, and the University of Michigan's Inaugural Distinguished Diversity Scholar Career Award, among many others. Dr. Jackson's absence will be deeply felt, but the work he began will persevere.

Dr. Jackson: (1) presenting at an HBEC Men's Forum; (2) posing with a U-M student mentee; (3) moderating a panel discussion at the IOG's Art of Aging Successfully Conference; (4) opening an HBEC Health Reception; (5) discussing policy needs with colleagues at the U-M.



**RESOURCES****Mental health**

**Crisis Connections**, 866-427-4747,  
24/7 Immediate emotional support

**Veterans Warmline**, 877-500-9276,  
Social wellness line [M-F 9am-5pm,  
Weekends 12:30-9pm]

**Detroit-Wayne Integrated Health**,  
Network, 800-241-4949, 24/7 crisis line

**Peer Warmline of Michigan**,  
800-733-7753, Caregiving Support

**AARP Friendly Call**, 888-281-0145,  
Social wellness line [Mon-Fri 9am-5pm]

**Suicide Hotline and Veterans Crisis  
Line**, 800-SUICIDE or 800-784-2433,

**Covid-19 Testing**

**Detroit Health Dept.**, 313-876-4000  
Translation line, 800-874-9226  
Schedule a free test or ask questions

**Food Assistance**

**Food and Other Resources Helpline**  
888-544-8773 [Mon-Fri 9am-5pm]

**Water Distribution**, 844-429-2837

**Focus: HOPE**, 313-494-4442  
Pre-packaged food boxes

**Gleaners Community Food Bank**  
866-453-2637 ext. 245  
Drive through food distribution

**Southwest Detroit Timebank**  
313-451-0135, Grocery Delivery,  
contact uoc.timebank@gmail.com

**Transportation**

**Detroit Dept. of Transportation**,  
313-933-1300, free bus services through  
the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic

**Utilities**

**Consumers Energy**, 800-477-5050,  
suspending all shutoffs for low-income  
customers and seniors

**DTE Energy**, 800-477-4747, suspending  
shutoffs for low-income folks & seniors

**Finance**

**Consumer Protection**, 877-999-6442  
hotline for questions about insurance,  
banks, mortgages, credit, etc.

**WSU, SAFE Program** (313) 664-2608  
One-on-one Financial Counseling

**MI Bridges**, 888-678-8914  
Medical, Food & Temporary Cash Assist.

**Unemployment Insurance Agency**  
866-500-0017, due to high call volumes,  
please file online at Michigan.gov or  
email LEO-UIAC-Info@michigan.gov

## Staying Connected to HBEC Members During a Crisis

Loneliness and isolation increase as we age, impacting older adults greatly and putting them at risk of mental and physical problems like depression or lack of access to healthcare. Covid-19 has increased loneliness and isolation due to quarantines, social distancing and widespread business and event closures. To help reduce social isolation and also to gather information about how our HBEC members have been coping with the pandemic, HBEC conducted a nine-month Covid-19 telephone outreach project. In this study, 15 callers reached out to our 1200 active HBEC members and conducted a brief survey and wellness check.

The research team consisted of CAB members, staff from the WSU Institute of Gerontology, and WSU students. Each call started with a simple wellness check-in, asking, "How are you doing?" Callers then asked questions about access to services, healthcare, technology, family and social life, mental health, and any strengths or challenges that participants encountered over the course of the pandemic. The research team completed 557 surveys.

In addition to staying connected with HBEC members, the phone calls served as a resource pipeline. Callers were not only collecting data but also brokering resources to participants as they expressed need. Callers shared at least 81 resources with members for mental health services, masks, grocery delivery, financial services, and caregiver support.

The next steps in this project are to complete follow-up calls with those who received a resource referral and then analyze the data collected. The results will strengthen our understanding of the lived experience of African American older adults in the



**9** Month Study

**15** Callers  
Reached out to

**1200** Active HBEC  
PRP Members

**557** Surveys  
Successfully  
Administered

Detroit area during a global pandemic. Results may also inform future programming and services offered through the HBEC and programs like it. The findings of the Telephone Outreach Project will be shared in an upcoming issue of this newsletter.

We thank all the HBEC members who participated in this project!

The study has already influenced other programs as it inspired the formation of the HBEC's first virtual social group, "Party Line," with a similar goal of connecting older adults at risk of the negative impacts of social isolation. Rather than a one-on-one phone call, Party Line is a weekly group call that can be joined by telephone or Zoom online. Party Line is a public group, open to all and facilitated by the MSW interns at the HBEC, Sarah Whitney and Hannah Gianfermi. Topics are chosen by participants and range from meditation and mindfulness to virtual travel during a pandemic. As we continue the work of reducing isolation, Party Line is a growing means of contact for our HBEC participants and their peers.



# Help with Research from the Safety of Your Home

*There are still opportunities to safely participate in research studies. All research through HBEC must be remote without any in-person contact. The list below contains studies looking for participants, no in-person visits needed.*

The **WALLET Study** – There is a concern that people who experience a decline in memory or thinking skills may unknowingly also experience a decline in taking care of their finances. This study will review the past 12 months of your bank statements and administer some psychological and cognitive tests. Looking for English-speaking adults aged 60 or older. Study completed by telephone. **Contact Vanessa Rorai at [vrorai@wayne.edu](mailto:vrorai@wayne.edu) or 313-664-2604**

The **HealthyLifetime Program** – Researchers from the University of Michigan School of Nursing are evaluating the benefit of a new 8-week nurse health coaching program to adults aged 50 and older with chronic health conditions. You will receive an honorarium for your participation. **Contact Marge Calarco at [mcalarco@med.umich.edu](mailto:mcalarco@med.umich.edu) or 734-615-0085.**

**Shared Decision-Making and Colorectal Cancer Screening Behaviors** – This study is conducting telephone interviews to understand informational needs and beliefs about colorectal cancer screening. Participants will review an existing health pamphlet to provide feedback. Must be between the ages of 75 and 85 and have some college or less (no bachelor's degree). **Contact Tamara Cadet at [tamara.cadet@simmons.edu](mailto:tamara.cadet@simmons.edu) or 617-521-3981**

**Community-based Approach to Early Identification of Transitions to Mild Cognitive Impairment and Alzheimer's Disease in African Americans, COVID Sub-Protocol** – Seeks to improve the way we diagnosis Alzheimer's Disease in African Americans using electroencephalogram (EEG) and computerized assessment. We are conducting a phone-only Enhanced Screening to identify those who may be a good fit for the study when in-person visits re-

sume. We are also administering a questionnaire to assess experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants must be African American and 65+ years old (among other criteria). Those who com-

plete the Enhanced Screening and COVID questionnaire will be compensated for their time. **Contact ELECTRA Study Team at 313-577-1692, or email [ELECTRA@wayne.edu](mailto:ELECTRA@wayne.edu)**

## WHO WE ARE



### Participant Research Pool (PRP)

A database of older African Americans open to participate in research studies on aging. When you become a member of the HBEC, you are added to the Participant Resource Pool. **Web: <https://mcuaaar.wayne.edu/participant>**  
**Ph: 313-664-2604**

### Healthier Black Elders Center (HBEC)

The community outreach program of MCUAAAR responsible for educating seniors about health and promoting research on older African Americans. **Web: <https://mcuaaar.wayne.edu/healthier>**  
**Ph : 313-664-2604**

### Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research (MCUAAAR)

One of the RCMAR centers jointly run by WSU, U-M and MSU to train scholars in African American aging research to reduce health disparities faced by minority older adults. Principal Investigators are James S. Jackson, PhD, U-M; Peter Lichtenberg, PhD, ABPP, WSU; and Joan Ilardo, PhD, MSU. **Web: <https://mcuaaar.wayne.edu>**

### Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR)

Created and funded by the NIA, RCMAR coordinates and supports 18 centers across the country, each focusing on a particular population and/or disease. The Michigan Center for African American Aging Research is one of those centers. **Web: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/dbsr/resource-centers-minority-aging-research-rcmar>**

### National Institute on Aging (NIA)

A governmental agency that is part of the National Institutes of Health. It funds scientific research to understand the nature of aging and supports centers including MCUAAAR. **Web: <https://www.nia.nih.gov>**

It Starts Here

# HBEC Staff Comings & Goings

On behalf of the HBEC program and the Community Advisory Board members, we would like to thank HBEC staff members **Ms. JoAnn Smith** and **Ms. Patricia Watkins** for their many years of service and support. Their dedication and care to HBEC members, research and programs has greatly contributed to advancing the goal of HBEC. Ms. JoAnn will continue serving as a Community Board member, and Ms. Patricia will now be a true volunteer for our community.

We welcome **Ms. Patricia Mullin** and **Ms. Adelia Cooley** as new HBEC staff members. Their role as staff is critical to keep the program running, including updating HBEC member contact information and surveys.

**Ms. Patricia** started attending HBEC Lunch & Learns when she was around 52-years-old. "The events were very informative," she said. "I loved being around the seniors. Each of us has a different personality and a different perspective on our life. My personality is open. I am a people person. I am very



outgoing. I love to share information. HBEC is a perfect fit for me." Ms. Patricia previously worked in financial planning, insurance, health care (radiology and nuclear medicine) and she ran a licensed Adult Foster Care home. Her passion is helping people.



**Ms. Adelia** became an HBEC member in 2019. "In my experience since joining HBEC, I sincerely delight in being a part of the HBEC team. It allows me freedom, autonomy and

flexibility," she said. "My duties challenge me to deal with the different personalities and temperaments of our HBEC participants in positive encouraging ways. In today's world, many people cannot genuinely say they enjoy their job, especially seniors, as I do. I enjoy hearing HBEC members tell stories, give advice, and provide me with unlimited life lessons."

You might be contacted by Ms. Adelia or Ms. Pat to update your information. Feel free to ask them questions about HBEC and share your suggestions for future programming!

## SAVE THE DATE

### Planning for Seniors Housing in Changing Cities: A Cross-National Exchange

May 11 & 12, 2021 | Virtual Event



Please join this virtual event to learn about the future of senior housing across the country. MCUAAR faculty member **Dr. Tam Perry** has researched how older adults transition to different types of housing and helped to organize this conference.

For more information on how to register, call 313-577-4402 or email

[SeniorsHousingConference@gmail.com](mailto:SeniorsHousingConference@gmail.com)





*A Social Group for Older Detroiters*  
Join us by phone or computer!

A virtual social group for anyone feeling isolated. Hosted by the Healthier Black Elders Center at Wayne State University. There will be icebreakers, games, poems, videos, and general topics. Meet us on Zoom every Tuesday from 1:00 - 2:00 pm now through April 20.



Join Us Here:  
<https://bit.ly/hbecparty>

Call in:  
1-646-876-9923

Meeting ID:  
438 691 8233

**Questions? Contact:**

Call 313-664-2616  
Hannah Gianfermi at  
fz8926@wayne.edu or  
Sarah Whitney at  
er7366@wayne.edu



**Healthier Black Elders Center**  
Wayne State University  
Institute of Gerontology



**Sample Agenda**

- Introductions
- Icebreaker
- Potential Topics:
  - *Ways to have Fun*
  - *Physical Health*
  - *Mental Health*
  - *Ways to De-Stress*
  - *Exercise and Activities*
  - *Cognitive Activities*
  - *Careers and Retirement*
  - *Hobbies*
  - *Things that give life meaning*
- Games
- Concluding Remarks & Next Week's News

The Healthier Black Elders Center is part of the Michigan State University, University of Michigan and Wayne State University Michigan Center for Urban African American Aging Research: A National Institute on Aging Grant Program







# Lunch & Learns

If you have any questions,  
contact us at  
313-664-2616



## Join us for online Lunch & Learn webinar events!

Each Lunch & Learn webinar will listed will start at 11:00 am with presentations from 11:30 until 12:30 pm. You can join by computer to see and hear the presentation, or by telephone to listen to the presentation.

*If you would like a reminder before the event, please RSVP at 313-664-2616 leave a voice message with your:*

- Name
- Phone number
- Lunch & Learn Topic &
- How you are attending, by phone or computer

**To join by computer,** type this link  
<https://bit.ly/HBELunch>  
into your internet browser to join the webinar.

**To join by telephone,** dial:  
1-312-626-6799,  
Webinar ID:  
954 9577 4535

Can't attend?  
Listen to recorded webinars on our Healthier Black Elders Center website. After the presentation dates, visit:

<https://mcuaaar.org/resources/videos/hbec>

## *Financial Empowerment during the Pandemic*

**Tuesday, March 30** 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

The pandemic has brought stress to many aspects of our lives, particularly our financial wellbeing. SAFE (Successful Aging thru Financial Empowerment) Director **LaToya Hall** will share critical information on Covid-19 scams. Specializing in estate planning, estate administration and probate practice, attorney **Howard Collens** will discuss how we can protect our finances in cases of unexpected illness or loss.



## *Put Your Best Foot Forward*

**Wednesday, April 21** 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Kick up your feet and join us as we talk about an important but often overlooked part of our health—our feet! Dr. Monica Summers, Flint native and podiatrist, will share advice on using proper footwear to improve circulation and prevent injury, discuss self-care strategies for those managing diabetes and arthritis, as well as self-treatment for common, painful foot conditions. Dr. Summers earned her Doctorate of Podiatric Medicine from Temple University in Philadelphia, and works on research teams at Michigan State University, including the Church Challenge and Project ReCast.



## *Glaucoma Specialist*

**Thursday, May 27** 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Two glaucoma specialists will share important information to identify, manage, and treat glaucoma. Dr. Paula Anne Newman-Casey is an ophthalmologist and the co-director of the Kellogg Eye Center for eHealth at the University of Michigan. Ms. Phalatha McHaney-Conner is a Clinical Subjects Coordinator and Glaucoma Health Coach. Their work focuses on how to help people take better control of their glaucoma.



## *Let's Talk Brain Health*

**Tuesday, June 15** 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Dr. Ana Daugherty, a neuroscientist at Wayne State, has a special talent for explaining brain health in a simple and entertaining way. She will explain early, subtle signs of dementia and how your lifestyle can protect and enhance your brain and your ability to remember.



*We look forward to seeing you:)*



## Messages from our Community Advisory Board



### During the Pandemic

by Patricia Mullin  
CAB Member & HBEC Staff

I believe the entire world was devastated by Covid-19; no one was prepared for this infectious disease. Information about the pandemic was broadcast in March of 2020 by television and radio. Masks, gloves, toilet tissue, and thermometers were all out of stock, so the disease continued to spread rapidly. I lost several family members over the course of the pandemic.



My dad was one of the victims of this disease. My brother and sister-in-law decided he needed to go to the hospital three weeks before he passed. During his stay, no one was permitted to see him, so I called daily or several times a day. I was angry and hurt. This did not seem fair. He was eighty-five years old and the only health issue he had was kidney stones, which were to be surgically removed next month. I continued to ask if he ate, if he had water, and how he was doing. Sometimes it would take a long time for a nurse to come to the phone, and they would tell me

there were no masks or hospital gowns available. I worked in the medical field for over twenty-five years, I could not imagine lacking the proper supplies. More than anything, I wanted my dad to come home.

When it came to his last day, the doctor called and asked if he could be taken off the ventilator. He explained that he had coded three times and his ribs were broken, and his eyes were dilated. I consented and I was able to go to say my last goodbye before they removed the tubing. It was just last year on his birthday he stated he wanted to live to be 108 years old. I spoke to my Dad tearfully. I said a prayer, *The Lord is my Shepherd*, and when I touched him he was still warm. I love you Dad. Working in the medical field I saw this image so often. But this was my Dad. That was the last time I saw my Dad. There was no funeral. My siblings spent their Easter at the cemetery to say their goodbyes.

A few years ago, I had conversations with my Dad and my Mom. I asked them what they wanted me to do at their end of life. They both were reluctant to make any decisions. My Mom died two years prior to this experience. I was the beneficiary of most of the assets, and in charge of the bank accounts and the family home. I divided everything evenly, as I had learned to do through my work on the seminars with the SAFE program. It was really difficult just trying to talk to my parents about death. My experience presenting on the SAFE program in the community to seniors helped me do this. There is

a saying that everything happens for a reason. I am thankful I was in the position to be there for my parents' as their caregiver and have the knowledge to talk to them about their final thoughts.

*We thank Ms. Patricia for her courage and honesty in sharing this difficult experience that many have also faced during the pandemic. If you would like to learn more about the SAFE program and about estate planning from an attorney, please see details for our o March 30 Lunch & Learn event.*



### Expanding Horizons

by Henry Swift, CAB Member

On October 26-28 last year, I participated in the Sage Symposium (via Zoom) which is a multi-state



conference convened to address the obstacles broadly thwarting participatory research regarding senior adults. It sought input and informed discussion from varied gerontology-focused

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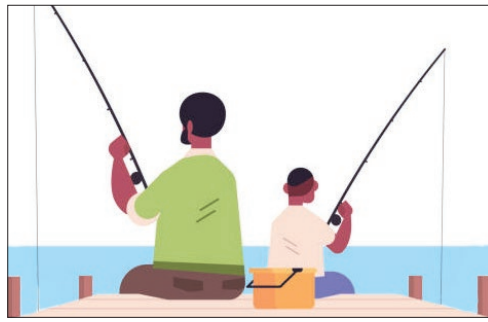
institutions and agencies on diverse issues affecting our aging population. This event afforded me an opportunity to share an examination of “engaged research,” as well as other multi-level topics.

In 2019, I was privileged to join the Healthier Black Elders Center’s (HBEC) Community Advisory Board (CAB). There are several reasons that I eagerly joined this committee, among which are:

1. To assist the Institute of Gerontology in reviewing proposals on important research studies affecting seniors.
2. To gain an understanding of what happens clinically in the “aging” process, and to learn about new advances and discoveries in this area.
3. To remain active, productive, and contributory, as I navigate this pivotal phase of my own life.

I have been more than gratified by the above experiences. One project that has been very fulfilling is the impassioned telephone outreach to sheltered-in-place HBEC members confined by Covid-19. HBEC membership is composed of more senior women than men. Black men are disproportionately absent; this group is heavily afflicted by the “Big Three”: diabetes, high blood pressure, and prostate issues. The CAB might focus on bolstering this segment of our membership by exploring ways of increasing their participation in research.

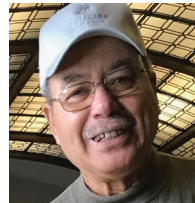
As an octogenarian myself, I am inspired by the discoveries and advancement in research emerging on the horizon. As the population of us seniors and “baby boomers” grow, the need for research is vital now and for the future. I have participated in two research studies and feel I can contribute in some way to this effort.



## State of Michigan Eat Safe Fish Program

by Jim Bridgforth, CAB Member

I have been a River Walker for the state of Michigan “Eat Safe Fish program” for several years. I am responsible for visiting fishing sites along the Detroit River to talk with anglers about the fish in the river.



This involves sharing printed and verbal information about which fish have fewer chemicals and are safer to eat. I also provide recommendations on which fish are better to catch (less chemicals), how to clean the fish (filet), how to best cook fish (grill, or if fried do not re-use the oil on new fish), healthy serving sizes, and who should limit eating fish, such as women planning to be

or currently pregnant, children under 15, and those with major health issues such as heart problems and diabetes.

I collect data from anglers by each site as to the number of people fishing, their sex, who eat the fish and who do not, how often individuals eat fish from the river, serving sizes, if there are children with them, and the number of Eat Safe Fish brochures and related materials given to anglers. This information is used to understand who is fishing on the river, and the fish-eating habits of anglers and families.

This data allows the State of Michigan to measure the effectiveness of the Eat Safe Fish program in terms of how many people understand and use the information to guide their fishing and fish eating habits, thereby protecting their health and the health of their friends and families. The program objective is to have people enjoy fishing while safely eating the fish caught.

*For more information on this program, visit the Michigan Department of Health & Human Services (MDHHS) website at [www.michigan.gov/mdhhs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs) or call*



*“It was really difficult just trying to talk to my parents about death. My experience presenting on the SAFE program in the community to seniors helped me do this.”*

– Patricia Mullin

*“As an octogenarian myself, I am inspired by the discoveries and advancement in research emerging on the horizon.”*

– Henry Swift

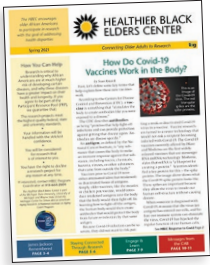
*“I collect data from anglers by each site. . . This data allows the State of Michigan to measure the effectiveness of the Eat Safe Fish program.”*

– Jim Bridgforth



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 SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER

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 If you would like to receive HBEC program information, event announcements and updates by email, please contact Program Coordinator Vanessa Rorai at [vrorai@wayne.edu](mailto:vrorai@wayne.edu) to be added to our email list.