

# THE TISCH CANCER EQUITY LAB



## OVERVIEW:

Putting 2020 in hindsight, we are thrilled to welcome the new year. Like many of our members, our team had to pivot to remote work and programs quickly.

In 2021, we will continue to promote equity in health through our research, education, and community engagement efforts.

In this issue, we describe our current research projects, each with its unique methods in understanding health disparities.

**FEBRUARY IS  
NATIONAL CANCER  
PREVENTION  
MONTH!**

## Current Projects

### Social Networks in Public Housing Social Networks and Cancer Screening Project:

Despite widely available cancer screening examinations that can lead to early detection, cancer disparities continue to persist among underserved populations. Social networks can positively impact health by helping gain access to healthcare and sharing information and resources, but few studies have examined how these networks can be leveraged to or promote healthy behavior change among underserved communities. Over the past four years, Dr. Jamilia Sly has been conducting research to better understand the cancer education and screening needs of residents who live in East and Central Harlem. We first conducted in-depth interviews with New York City Housing Authority - NYCHA - residents, and leaders and then conducted an extensive survey of NYCHA and other community residents over the age of 50. Results from the survey found that 35% of women had never had a screening colonoscopy and 62% had never had a blood stool test for colorectal cancer; 45% of men had never had a screening colonoscopy and almost 50% had never had a blood stool test. We are using the results to develop a new interactive program that will be aimed at increasing colorectal cancer screening in adults 50-64 years old in our community. For more information, please contact Dr. Jamilia Sly at ([Jamilia.sly@mssm.edu](mailto:Jamilia.sly@mssm.edu)).

## R21- Increasing Breast Cancer Screening in Chinese Immigrants

The overall goal of this research is to increase breast cancer screening in Chinese immigrant women. Less than 30% of Chinese immigrant women living in New York City have ever had a mammogram in their lifetime. Over half of these women cannot speak English well and do not regularly see a doctor. Thus, this community is in great need of access to breast cancer screening and education. Funded by the National Cancer Institute, our study aims to develop a culturally- and linguistically appropriate breast health education program for Chinese immigrant women based on the evidence-based Witness Project. Recruitment for this study is expected to begin later this month. For more information, please contact Dr. Suzanne Vang at ( [Suzanne.vang@mssm.edu](mailto:Suzanne.vang@mssm.edu))

## R21- A Community-Based Approach to improving Hepatitis B Screening in West Africans in the US

Chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection is a leading cause of liver disease and hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), the second most common cause of cancer death in the world. West African-born persons bear a great burden of HBV infection in the US, many of whom have not been screened. This study aims to test the association of sociocultural factors in West Africans with positive views on HBV screening and intent to undergo screening. A survey will be administered on the phone and online using the REDcap platform. shared with consenting participants that will gather their experiences with Hepatitis B screening, language preferences, cultural influences and health literacy knowledge of Hepatitis B. The information we receive from the surveys will aide us in creating a culturally competent educational program on Hepatitis B.

To eligible for the study, you must be 18 years or older and you must be born in a West African country. For more information, please contact Joyce Bwenyi at ( [joyce.bwenyi@mssm.edu](mailto:joyce.bwenyi@mssm.edu)).

## Breastfeeding Project

In alignment with the goals of the New York State Patricia S. Brown Breast Cancer Risk Reduction Education Research Project, this research aims to develop an educational program for reducing and ultimately helping to eliminate breast cancer disparities among Black women. The results have the potential to provide important details and information about Black women's breastfeeding support needs, address solutions to increase participation in this protective behavior, as well as educate Black women about reducing their personal breast cancer risk, which could have long-term impacts on breast health of Black women. As we know, our communities are reeling from COVID-19 and the crisis it has unleashed. As we move past the initial impact and towards recovery, we have resumed our recruitment efforts through several virtual community breastfeeding coalitions. We will continue to increase awareness and reduce racial inequities in breastfeeding support for Black mothers. Please let us know if you would like more information about participating. For more information please contact Lyshsae Otarola at ( [Lyshsae.Otarola@mountsinai.org](mailto:Lyshsae.Otarola@mountsinai.org)).

## Colorectal Cancer in Adults at Young Onset (CRAYON)

Colorectal cancer (CRC) incidence is on the rise in individuals under age 50, an age group that is not screened unless there is a high-risk family history. This alarming trend in early-onset CRC (EOCRC) currently accounts for approximately 10% of all CRC and continues to rise. The “usual” risk factors for CRC (seen in individuals older than age 50), such as obesity, sedentary lifestyle, smoking, alcohol use, family history of CRC, while present in some persons, do not explain most EOCRC cases. If we can identify risk factors/biomarkers for EOCRC, we could use them to estimate intervention in higher-risk individuals with early screening or risk mitigation in early adulthood. This is a feasibility study to enable us to understand how best to identify and enroll both cases and controls as well as the study measures to be collected in a future study. Participants will complete a one-time comprehensive survey. This study will resume recruitment soon, once the remote consenting process is approved. For more information please contact Cristina Villagra at ([cristina.villagra@mssm.edu](mailto:cristina.villagra@mssm.edu)).

## Clinical Validation of an Optimized Multi-Target Stool DNA (mt-sDNA 2.0) TEST, for Colorectal Cancer Screening, Blue-C

This is a national research study of an investigational device, sponsored by Exact Sciences, to test a home-based stool samples using the Exact surveillance test to detect colorectal cancer (CRC) and pre-cancerous polyps in people with an average risk of developing colorectal cancer. The sponsor has already developed a test called Cologuard,<sup>®</sup> a multi-target stool DNA test, and was approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), for use in patients 45 years or older who are at average risk. The present study is testing the ability of version 2 of the multi-target stool DNA test to accurately and reliably detect CRC and pre-cancer in subjects 40 years and older, when compared with the other standard ways to screen for CRC, such as with a fecal immunochemical test (also known as FIT) and a colonoscopy procedure. Version 2 of the multi-target stool DNA test is under investigation and is not FDA approved. This study has recently been approved and it is set to enroll participants remotely, by consenting electronically and receiving the home stool DNA stool kit via mail courier. If you are planning your colonoscopy and would like more information please contact Cristina Villagra at ([cristina.villagra@mssm.edu](mailto:cristina.villagra@mssm.edu)).

## Safety of Immunosuppression in A Prospective Cohort of Inflammatory Bowel Disease Patients With a History of Cancer (SAPPHIRE)

This multi-site research study, led by Dr. Steven Itzkowitz, is a prospective registry of patients with IBD who have a history of cancer. Subjects will be followed yearly, for 5 years, for the development of new or recurrent cancer and results will be correlated with the type of IBD medications the patients have received. We are currently recruiting nationwide. During COVID times, the Registry continues to recruit participants, as we converted into all remote consenting and interviewing early on. For more information please contact Cristina Villagra at ([cristina.villagra@mssm.edu](mailto:cristina.villagra@mssm.edu)).