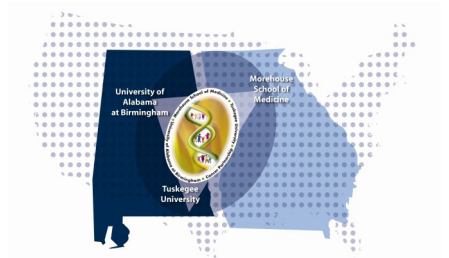


UAB MINORITY HEALTH AND HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH CENTER

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2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) Scholar Directory



MID-SOUTH TRANSDISCIPLINARY
COLLABORATIVE CENTER FOR
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2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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MSM/TU/UAB Cancer Partnership

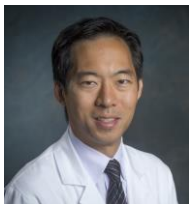
Dr. Daniel Abugri received his B.Sc. (Hons.) in Applied Chemistry with Environmental Science from the University for Development Studies, Navrongo, Ghana, and M.Sc. in Chemistry with concentration in Analytical Biochemistry and Ph.D. in Integrative Biosciences with concentration in Biochemistry and Molecular Parasitology from Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, USA. Dr. Abugri's current research encompasses drug discovery from natural products, medicinal plants, ethnomedicine and ethnopharmacology, molecular parasitology, understanding the biochemistry of host-parasite interaction and parasite-drug interaction, anti-cancer natural products discovery, antimicrobial agents against bacteria and fungi, antimalarial and anti-toxoplasmosis agents development, vaccine development, biochemical method development. Furthermore, Dr. Abugri works on natural sources of Lipids, Proteins, Enzymes and Peptides, Dyes, indicators, antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory agents which can be beneficial in terms of cost, availability and user safety and the environment. Dr. Abugri has published over 20 papers in many high impact peer reviewed Journals, two books and two books chapters. He also serves on editorial board and a technical reviewer for high impact Journals in Chemistry, Food Chemistry, Nutrition, Food Science, Biochemistry and Infectious Diseases. His goal is to use ethnomedicinal approach to overcome health disparities in cancer and other infectious diseases globally.



Aamir Ahmad, PhD
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HDRTP 2016
U of South Alabama

Dr. Aamir Ahmad joined the 'Health Disparities in Cancer' Program at the University of South Alabama's Mitchell Cancer Institute (USAMCI) earlier this year. He earned his PhD from AMU, India and completed his post-doctoral training at National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, MD. At USAMCI, he is developing a research program focused on racial disparity in lung cancer because this represents a problem that has not been adequately addressed, despite convincing statistics supporting significant differences in the mortality in African American minorities, compared to White Caucasian American populations. Dr. Ahmad aims to utilize his experience in epigenetic regulation of cancer metastasis and drug resistance towards understanding the molecular basis of racial disparity in lung cancer.



Daniel Chu, MD
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HDRTP 2016
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer Partnership

Daniel I. Chu, MD, is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed his undergraduate at Yale and medical school at The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. After general surgery residency at Boston University, he completed a colon and rectal surgery fellowship at the Mayo Clinic. His clinical practice spans the spectrum of colorectal diseases and his research interests focus on identifying, understanding and reducing disparities in surgery.

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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HDRTP 2016
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer Partnership

Dr. Sarah Dilley is a Fellow in the Division of Gynecologic Oncology at UAB. Dr. Dilley earned her undergraduate degree in Psychology from Emory University in 2006, after which she stayed at Emory to work on a maternal substance abuse research and outreach project. She then matriculated at Indiana University School of Medicine where she graduated in 2012. In between her 3rd and 4th years of medical school, she earned a Master of Public Health degree from Harvard University, with a concentration in Family and Community Health. During medical school she also volunteered in a women's hospital in Eldoret, Kenya, and was an Albert Schweitzer Fellow with a project focusing on access to women's healthcare for women in transitional housing. After graduating from medical school she completed her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland, OR. As a gynecologic oncology fellow she is interested in improving the disparities in the incidence, outcomes and quality of care for patients with gynecologic cancers, with a focus on HPV-related cancers.



Deborah Ejem, PhD
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HDRTP Scholar 2016
NRMN

Dr. Deborah Ejem is a postdoctoral scholar in the School of Nursing at University of Alabama at Birmingham. She earned a B.S. in Biology (minor in Chemistry), a B.A. in Sociology, an M.A. in Sociology, and a Ph.D. in Medical Sociology all from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Currently, she examining the associations among reciprocal (dyadic) relationships, family caregiver burden, spirituality, patient quality of life (QoL) and symptom outcomes in older African American heart failure patients and their family caregivers.



TJ Exford, PhD, MEd
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HDRTP 2016
ASU/UAB Cancer Partnership

TJ Exford, PhD, is currently an Assistant Professor of Exercise Science in the Health, Physical Education and Recreation Department at Alabama State University. Dr. Exford earned her Ph.D in Exercise Science from Auburn University, School of Kinesiology with a focal concentration in exercise physiology. Dr. Exford has keenly pursued the integration of mindfulness meditation practices, in physical and health education since her own path of personal growth and embodiment of eastern contemplative mediation began that same integration. Her research has focused on the effects of a Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program on increasing mindfulness and its impact on perceived stress in college students. More recently, she has become interested in the relationship between mindfulness, physical activity, and health disparities in minority populations. Dr. Exford is interested in developing an intervention integrating mindfulness based stress reduction (MBSR) partnering with conventional healthcare in a clinical or community based setting to address cancer and cardiovascular health disparities in minority populations to include a focus on the role of participation in physical activity as a survivorship behavior. It has been shown that mindfulness may moderate the relationship between intrinsic motivation and physical activity. While research has revealed that MBSR interventions have led to a reduction in levels of depression, anxiety, and fear of recurrence along with increased energy, physical functioning, and physical role functioning in cancer survivors.

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDRTP 2016
RCMAR**

Dr. Anne Halli-Tierney is an assistant professor in the department of family medicine at The University of Alabama's College of Community Health Sciences. She works with medical education at levels of learning from undergraduate to post graduate students, and focuses on interdisciplinary models of education. Her research interests include interdisciplinary educational models and their effects on students' learning, the impacts of interdisciplinary health care models on older adults' wellbeing and quality of life, and the quality of care provided in interdisciplinary settings.



Bertha Hidalgo, MPH, PhD
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**HDRTP 2016
NRMN**

Dr. Bertha Hidalgo an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology, Associate Scientist in the UAB Nutrition Obesity Research Center and Faculty Scholar in the Center for the Study of Community Health. She holds degrees from Stanford University, the University of Southern California and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Her research focuses health disparities related to cardiometabolic diseases, with a special focus on Latino populations and epigenomics. She has received research funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation New Connections Program to investigate whether genetic and epigenetic differences exist between subgroups of Latinos for cardiometabolic diseases (e.g. obesity, cardiovascular disease, type-2 diabetes) by first investigating differences in subgroups of Latino children and obesity in an epidemiologic study. She has also received the 2014 Back of the Envelope award to create a multi-ethnic biorepository for cardiometabolic diseases. Recently, Dr. Hidalgo became the principal investigator of Epigenomics of Cardiometabolic Disease in Mexican American, a K01 award focused on better understanding the genetic and environmental contributors to cardiometabolic diseases among Mexican Americans. Prior to award of the K01, Dr. Hidalgo was a diversity supplement recipient, sponsored by UNC Chapel Hill, to explore genetic heterogeneity in Hispanic/Latinos with T2D and metabolic syndrome. Her research interests include cardiometabolic diseases, cancer, genetic epidemiology, health disparities and Latino health. Bertha is an active member of several epidemiology and public health professional societies – including current chair of the Minority Affairs Committee for the American College of Epidemiology - and active in organizations in and around UAB.



Carolyn Howard, PhD
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**HDRTP 2016
Jackson State U**

Dr. Carolyn Bingham Howard is an Associate Professor of Biology in the College of Science, Engineering and Technology at Jackson State University (JSU). She earned a B.S. in Biology from JSU in 1981 and earned her Ph.D. in Microbiology from the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) in Jackson, MS in 1995. Prior to assuming her position as a faculty member at JSU in 1996, she completed a one-year post-doctoral fellowship appointment at UMMC. Her current research focus is toward identifying a clinically actionable target of a novel and less toxic therapeutic for triple negative breast cancers (TNBCs). TNBCs are inherently resistant to most available therapies, thereby promoting tumor relapse and recurrence. Preliminary studies conducted in her laboratory indicate that treatment with aqueous extracts of *Vernonia amygdalina* (VA extracts) decreased TNBC cell proliferation *in vitro*, and reduced initiation and progression of tumors *in vivo*. Broad conclusions from her studies will be directly relevant to better understanding the importance of prevention strategies and novel combination therapies including VA extracts for insidious forms of breast cancer (BC) that contribute to higher incidence of BC mortality in African-American women. Dr. Howard has published several research articles and submitted grant proposals for funding to continue her important work

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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HDRTP 2016
ASU/UAB Cancer Partnership

Dr. Sapna Jain is Assistant Professor of Chemistry at Alabama State University, Montgomery, AL. Dr. Jain currently works in the field of Nanochemistry and Nanoengineering. This field is complex and multidisciplinary in that it combines expertise in synthetic and analytical chemistry, materials science, and electrochemistry with specialties in synthesis and in-situ functionalization of hybrid inorganic-organic nanoparticles, highly reactive nanoenergetic materials, fuel additives, sensors and detectors. Dr. Jain graduated from the world-renowned Indian Institute of Technology (IIT Delhi), where she was also later offered two prestigious postdoctoral fellowships. Upon completing her Master's degree, Dr. Jain was awarded the gold medal in for her stellar scholastic achievements. Consistently ranked among the premier universities in India, IIT Delhi served as a launch pad for Dr. Jain's career and she continued to use her interdisciplinary background to develop biosensors for bacterial pathogen detection. Concomitantly, she is working on ways to desulfurize diesel fuel, coal, and other fuel sources by utilizing novel catalysts for biomass conversion. Her work has significant implications for the future of medicine, fuel production, and even national defense. Dr. Jain has publications in reputed peer reviewed journals. She has several presentations at international conferences and symposiums. Dr. Jain is an active member of the Editorial Board for the Journals, *Current organic Chemistry* and *Journal of Nanogenomics and Nanomedicine*. She also regularly serves as a peer reviewer for other prestigious international journals. She has also served as judge in technical sessions at the 2013 and 2014 NanoBio Summit meetings, ABRCMS 2016, NSF student chapter reviewer 2016, Alpha Beta Chi abstract reviewer and has reviewed two chapters of "Physical Science," a textbook published by Tillery McGraw Hill.



Allison Jones, MS, PhD
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HDRTP 2016
RCMAR

Dr. Allison Jones is an Assistant Professor in the Acute, Chronic & Continuing Care Department at the UAB School of Nursing where she teaches in the Undergraduate nursing program. She earned her BSN, MSN, and PhD from the University of Kentucky. She has a background in emergency and trauma nursing with a broader focus on critical care. Dr. Jones is also a Certified Clinical Nurse Specialist in the Adult Acute Care field. Her research focuses on outcomes related to transfusion of stored blood components, including the blood collection, preservation, and utilization processes, and how those issues impact patient outcomes. She is interested in exploring transfusion practices and outcome disparities in patients with major trauma.



Robina Josiah Willock, MPH, PhD
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HDRTP 2016
**NMA Cobb Institute/
Mid-South TCC**

Dr. Robina Josiah Willock is an Assistant Professor in Community Health and Preventive Medicine at Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM). She serves as a Health Services Researcher with the Study Design, Biostatistics, and Data Management Core of the Research Center for Clinical and Translational Research. She also teaches in several graduate public health courses including Health Communication, Academic Writing, and Bridges to Health Equity. In addition to her commitment to teaching and mentoring students in the MSM Masters of Public Health program, Dr. Josiah Willock has several years' experience designing and facilitating community-health education efforts and community-based research. Her general research interests center on health communication, risk messaging and facilitating behavior change in clinical practice and among high disparity populations such as women, ethnic/racial minorities and low health literacy individuals. In her current research Dr. Josiah Willock seeks to delineate the impact of psychosocial factors and mental health/well-being in disparities in hospital readmission among heart failure patients from vulnerable populations.

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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HDRTP 2016
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer Partnership

Dr. Neeraj Kapur is working as a Post-doctoral Fellow in department of Microbiology, Biochemistry and Immunology at Morehouse School of Medicine, Atlanta. Dr. Kapur has completed Ph.D in Molecular Virology and Hepatology from Department of Pathology at All India Institute of Medical Sciences, India. His PhD was focused on determining the molecular mechanisms of attachment and entry of Hepatitis E virus in liver cells. After completing Ph.D., he has accepted postdoctoral position at Morehouse School of Medicine, Department of Microbiology Biochemistry and Immunology. Dr. Kapur's current research is focused on defining the role of chemokine in cancer and disparity associated with therapeutic and disease outcome.



Rachel Lancaster, MD
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HDRTP 2016
NRMN

Dr. Rachael Lancaster is an Assistant Professor of Surgery within the division of Surgical Oncology and specializes in breast surgery. Dr. Lancaster became a doctor of medicine after receiving her degree from the University of Alabama School of Medicine at Birmingham in 2010. She completed her residency in General Surgery at the University of Alabama Birmingham in 2015. After surgical residency, she completed a Fellowship in Breast Surgical Oncology at the University of California San Francisco. She then returned to Birmingham, Alabama to begin her clinical and academic practice at UAB in 2016. Dr. Lancaster's research interests include patient education and its impact on decision making, breast cancer prevention, impact of disparities on breast cancer prevention and access to appropriate care, and breast cancer treatment outcomes.



Jeffrey Lang, MS
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HDRTP 2016
Creighton University

Jeff Lang is an Assistant Director in the Health Sciences – Multicultural and Community Affairs (HS-MACA) office providing academic support for students in the Creighton University Post-Baccalaureate Program and students in the pipeline programs. The goal of the Post-Baccalaureate program is to recruit and support under-represented students, preparing them for success in medical or dental school. He has held this position for six years. Mr. Lang also uses his training in educational psychology to teach 'Learning How to Learn' courses with applied strategy instruction in the post-baccalaureate learning laboratory. His research interests are learning strategies, cooperative learning and the outcomes of post-baccalaureate programs.

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDRTP 2016
NRMN**

Dr. Mingli Liu is an Instructor at Morehouse School of Medicine, in Atlanta, GA. Her current research focuses on identifying signaling pathways associated with pathogenesis of fatal malaria with the goal of targeting upstream molecules in the development of novel interventions. Previously, Dr. Liu also conducted research focused on insulin-like growth factor (IGF-1) signaling pathways that mediate cell differentiation and proliferation.



Ian McDonough, PhD

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**HDRTP 2016
RCMAR**

Dr. Ian McDonough is currently an Assistant Professor in the Psychology Department at the University of Alabama and is an Associate of the Alabama Research Institute on Aging. Dr. McDonough received his BS from UCLA in 2006, his PhD from the University of Chicago in 2011, and did his postdoc at the Center for Vital Longevity at the University of Texas at Dallas until 2015. He recently received the Matilda White Riley Early Stage Investigator Honors from the National Institute of Health and was accepted into the highly competitive Butler-Williams Scholars Program at the National Institute on Aging. Dr. McDonough's current research focuses on the neural correlates of memory retrieval and how they differ with old age. More recently, he has also begun to investigate how the neural correlates differ in middle-aged and older adults at risk for Alzheimer's disease, with a particular focus on racial/ethnic health disparities.



Hina Mir, PhD

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**HDRTP 2016
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Dr. Mir received her PhD in Biochemistry from the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda, India. During her PhD she focused on determining the role of Poly ADP-Ribose Polymerase and Apoptosis Inducing factor in cell death and development. After completing PhD in 2011 she started investigating the role of Occludin on tight junction regulation as a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Physiology at University of Tennessee Health Science center, Memphis, TN. In 2013, Dr. Mir accepted postdoctoral position in the Department of Microbiology, Biochemistry and Immunology at Morehouse School of Medicine and was promoted as Research Associate in 2015 considering her exceptional contribution defining the role of chemokines in prostate and lung cancer. Her current research is focused on decoding the tumor-induced changes in immunological landscape contributing to cancer progression and disparity in disease aggressiveness and therapeutic outcome.

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDRTP 2016
Jackson State U**

Dr. Frank Mrema is a Forestry and Mycology Specialist at Alcorn State University - Mississippi Small Farm and Agribusiness Center. He earned his Masters and Ph.D. in Forestry Ecology and Environmental Research from the Swedish University of Sciences (SLU) – Uppsala, Sweden. Frank’s research focuses on the cultivation of medicinal mushrooms and evaluation of their metabolites production. His outreach educational program includes promoting the production of edible mushrooms and consumption of mushrooms as preventive measures against chronic diseases. Frank has teaching interests in Mycology, Forest Pathology, and Microbial Ecology. Dr. Mrema skills and capabilities will be useful in the Health Disparities Research Training Program especially in exploring more on medicinal mushroom production as a source of nutraceutical products.



Shenika Poindexter, PhD
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**HDRTP 2016
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Dr. Shenika Poindexter is originally from Indianola, MS. She graduated from Alcorn State University (ASU) with a B.S. in Biology in 2007. She then enrolled in the Initiative for Maximizing Diversity Program (IMSD) at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN. After completing the IMSD program, Shenika selected Dr. Christopher Williams as her thesis advisor and has recently defended her dissertation entitled, “Critical Regulators of Epithelial Homeostasis and Intestinal Crypt Regeneration: Identification of Novel BVES/BCAR3 Signaling Complex in EMT and Tumorigenesis and Biological Implications for MTG16 in Stem Cell Function, Proliferation, Apoptosis and DNA Repair”. She received her Ph.D. in Cancer Biology from Vanderbilt in May 2015. Dr. Poindexter is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at ASU. She will teach undergraduate and graduate level Genetics courses. She plans to start an academic research lab at Alcorn that integrates health disparities into current basic research projects.



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**HDRTP 2016
RCMAR**

Ms. Sola Aina-Popoola, is a Registered Nurse with a Master Degree in Nursing (Auburn University) and presently a PhD candidate at Auburn University College of Education. She has been a clinical nurse for 22 years and a Nurse Faculty for six years. She was selected as Holmes Scholar, 2016. She has three publications out of which two were peer-reviewed articles in both international and national journals. Presently, Ms. Popoola collaborates with other Health care professionals in self-management training education for Adult Diabetes Type 2 clients living in black belt counties of Alabama and working with two others colleges in promoting healthy management around Alabama.

2016 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Desiree Rivers, PhD, MSPH

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**HDRTP 2016
NMA Cobb Institute/
Mid-South TCC**

Dr. Desiree Rivers is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine and faculty in the Cancer Research Program at Morehouse School of Medicine. Her research interests include exploring the socio-ecological context of cancer disparities. Dr. Rivers holds a B.S. in Psychology from Vanderbilt University, a Master of Science in Public Health with a concentration in Health Care Organization and Policy from the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health, and a PhD in Health Education from Texas A&M University. Dr. Rivers served as a UAB Lister Hill Center for Health Policy Fellow and a Congressional Black Caucus Fellow during as well as a Diversity Fellow. Dr. Rivers completed a behavioral oncology postdoctoral fellowship at the NCI-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, Moffitt Cancer Center. Currently, Dr. Rivers is a W. Montague Cobb/ National Medical Association Health Institute Fellow. Dr. Rivers has conducted numerous professional presentations, contributed to several federally funded research and Centers of Excellence grants, as well as published articles highlighting her research and community engagement experience.



Archana Sharma, PhD

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**HDRTP 2016
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer Partnership**

Dr. Archana Sharma is currently working as an adjunct assistant professor in the biology department of Tuskegee University. She teaches courses related to cell genetics and molecular biology. She received her Ph.D. degree from Department of Biological Sciences, Auburn University, Alabama in year 2015. She has research experience in area of plant molecular genetics. Her research was mainly focused on the gene that controls root growth and shoot gravitropic response of *Arabidopsis thaliana*. She participated in GROW CELLS Cancer Research Project recently and she had the opportunity to explore the effect of various natural food resources on growth of breast cancer cells.



Wendy Thompson, DrPH

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**HDRTP 2016
Jackson State U**

Dr. Wendy Thompson is an Associate Professor of the Graduate Social Work Program at Jackson State University. She worked in a variety of settings such as community head- start, public school, drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility and department of health. Thompson has authored three peer-reviewed articles, presented at professional conferences and edited articles for the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health and Drug Abuse Issue of The Journal of Adventist Education. Dr. Thompson's research focus encompasses sickle cell disease, drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and disparities in health care.