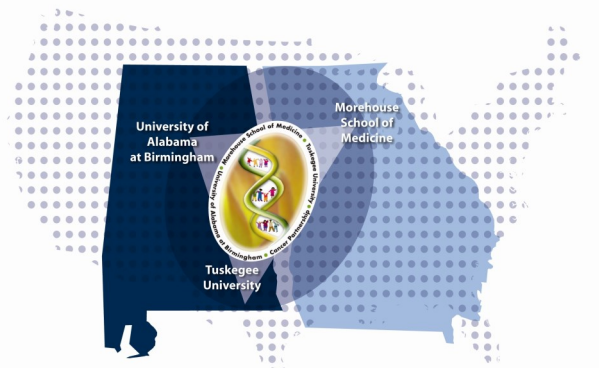


UAB MINORITY HEALTH AND HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH CENTER

Knowledge that will change your world



2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) Scholar Directory



MID-SOUTH TRANSDISCIPLINARY COLLABORATIVE CENTER FOR HEALTH DISPARITIES RESEARCH



2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDRTP 2017
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer
Partnership**

Dr. Benjamin Adu-Addai is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biomedical Science, College of Veterinary Medicine, at Tuskegee University. He earned his PhD degree in Pathology from Michigan State University and Doctor of Veterinary Medicine from Moscow State Academy of Veterinary Medicine and Biotechnology. Throughout his career, he has made significant contributions in the field of pathology, particularly through his research relating to infectious diseases and cancer. Dr. Adu-Addai's research interest is on infectious disease and cancer studies.



Hope Amm, PhD
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**HDRTP 2017
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer
Partnership**

Dr. Hope Amm is an Assistant Professor in the UAB Department of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery. She received her BS in Biological Sciences from Saint Mary's College and PhD in Pharmacology and Toxicology from UAB with a focus on cancer biology and novel Therapeutics. Dr. Amm completed the Dental Academic Research Training (DART) program as a post-doctoral scholar in the laboratory of Dr. Mary MacDougall and was a Mentored Experiences in Research, Instruction, and Teaching (MERIT) program Scholar-at-Large, which provided teaching experiences at a minority-partner institution. She has collaborated on projects related to the genetic and molecular basis of craniofacial diseases, particularly odontogenic tumors. She has characterized numerous cellular models of odontogenic tumors and developed new in vivo models. Dr. Amm was awarded a NIDCR K99/R00 to support her current research endeavors focusing on developmental pathways that play a role in the pathogenesis of human oral cancers and odontogenic tumors with a goal to develop targeted therapies.



Jennifer Bail, PhD, RN
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**HDRTP 2017
MSM/TU/UA Cancer
Partnership**

Dr. Jennifer Bail is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Nutrition Sciences at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). She has a non-traditional background of a ten-year career in the missile defense industry and being an entrepreneur of her own wellness business focused on nutrition and physical activity. Jennifer's loss of her mother to breast cancer inspired her to pursue her PhD in Nursing and a career in cancer disparities research. Her goal is to reduce cancer survivorship disparities and improve quality of life among cancer survivors.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Shahla Bari, MD, MS
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**HDRTP 2017
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer
Partnership**

Dr. Shahla Bari is a PGY3 resident in Internal Medicine at Morehouse school of Medicine. She received her MD from Patna Medical College in India, and completed a certificate course in Cancer Biology from University of Arkansas. She has worked in various cancer centers including Myeloma Institute of Research and Therapy, Moffitt Cancer Center, and Georgia Cancer Center at Grady Memorial Hospital. Her experience at these institutions has molded her interest in cancer research, especially disparities in cancer research, treatment, and outcomes.

During her residency, Dr. Bari has been actively involved in research and has published extensively in oncology. She has also received financial grants to advance her work in preventive, as well as integrative, oncology. Her current research endeavors are focused on "health disparities in cancer research" in projects with Morehouse and Emory faculty, including a clinical trial that is recruiting minority patients to study novel cancer treatment approaches. Dr. Bari started an Oncology working group where faculty, residents, medical students, and MS/MPH students convene to exchange ideas and advance research in this field.



Katherine Bydalek, PhD, FNP-BC
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**HDRTP Scholar 2017
University of South
Alabama**

Dr. Katherine Bydalek, is Interim Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor at the University of South Alabama College of Nursing. Dr. Bydalek received her Master of Science in Nursing and Family Nurse Practitioner degree from the University of South Alabama. She received her PhD in Health Sciences, International Health Education and Research from Touro College. She maintains a clinical practice at the University of South Alabama Student Health Center. She has utilized Human Simulations to teach students in Bachelors, Masters, Post-Graduate, and Doctoral Programs. Dr. Bydalek is currently involved in several areas of interest including family healthcare, geriatric healthcare, and health disparities research.



Erin Currie, PhD, RN
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**HDRTP 2017
NRMN**

Dr. Erin Currie is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Her research in neonatal and pediatric palliative care has focused on bereaved parents of infants after death in the neonatal intensive care unit and their experiences with pediatric palliative care. Currently, her research focuses on exploring the reach, quality, and impact of pediatric palliative care services in the Deep South, where historically underrepresented populations experience health disparities due to geographic and sociocultural factors such as race. Dr. Currie is a 2017 National Palliative Care Research Center Junior Faculty Career Development Award grantee.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Casey Elkins, DNP, NP-C, CLS, FNLA
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HDRTP 2017
University of South
Alabama

Dr. Casey Elkins is currently an Assistant Professor of Nursing and the founding Coordinator of the Clinical Lipidology sub-specialty program at the University of South Alabama. This subspecialty program is the only lipidology program embedded within a formal education track for students enrolled in health science courses to prepare students to improve treatment and outcomes for patients with complex dyslipidemias and hopefully increase the number of Clinical Lipid Specialists across the country. He completed his MSN at the University of South Alabama, MEd with emphasis in Higher Educational Leadership at Northcentral University, and DNP at Samford University. He was inducted as a Diplomate, Accreditation Council of Clinical Lipidology in 2013 and as a Fellow, National Lipid Association in 2016. He is a board certified Family Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Lipid Specialist. Dr. Elkins' research interest include familial hypercholesterolemia, statin intolerance, patient and provider adherence to lipid guidelines, complex and genetic dyslipidemias, dyslipidemias in patients with healthcare disparities, and exogenous testosterone replacement and dyslipidemia. Dr. Elkins has multiple podium and poster presentations and national publications related to lipid disorders and ASCVD prevention. Active in professional organizations, Dr. Elkins serves on the Board of Directors of the Southeastern Lipid Association and on several national committees for the National Lipid Association. He is also a member of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, the Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association, and the American College of Cardiology.



Heather Gunn, PhD
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HDRTP 2017
NRMN

Dr. Heather Gunn is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Alabama. She studies the social environment and sleep, and in particular, sleep as a mechanism by which relationships are associated with Cardiovascular Disease. She recently completed a postdoctoral fellowship in sleep medicine at University of Pittsburgh. She obtained her PhD from the University of Utah and her BS from Arizona State University. As a postdoctoral scholar, she received a Mentored Career Development Award from the Sleep Research Society Foundation and completed an independent project on parenting-adolescent relationships and adolescent sleep and cardiovascular reactivity. She recently moved back to the South after 30 years and lives in Tuscaloosa, AL with her husband and toddler.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Natalie Hernandez, PhD, MPH

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**HDRTP 2017
MSM/TU/UAB Cancer
Partnership**

Dr. Natalie Hernandez is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Community Health and Preventive Medicine and the Assistant Director of the Office of Community Engagement at Morehouse School of Medicine. Dr. Hernandez has a broad background in community-based participatory research (CBPR), cancer prevention, sexual and reproductive health disparities, health policy, and social determinants of health. She has more than 12 years of experience in developing community partnerships and implementing CBPR that engages with diverse stakeholder groups. She also has expertise in qualitative design and experience in conducting rigorous, robust qualitative research using a broad array of research methods (including focus groups, in-depth interviews, case studies, ethnography, observation, and document review). In 2006, She was the co-Principal Investigator of a study entitled, “Psychosocial and socio-cultural correlates of the human papillomavirus vaccine uptake and intentions among ethnoracial minority students”. This study examined ethnoracial minority male and female college students’ current knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and cultural factors that promoted or inhibited HPV vaccine acceptability. She currently serves as the PI on two studies related to sexual health equity: one is examining cultural, economic, social, structural, and policy factors contributing to high rates of unintended pregnancy among low income black and Latina women in Atlanta; the second is a CBPR needs assessment examining sexual and reproductive health facilitators and barriers in a low-income Atlanta community. Prior to academia, Dr. Hernandez held leadership positions in a number of coalitions in Georgia dedicated to advancing health equity. She has successfully managed and administered the projects (e.g. staffing, research protections, budget), collaborated with other researchers, and produced peer-reviewed publications as well as conference presentations.



LaShaune Johnson, PhD

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**HDRTP 2017
Creighton University**

Dr. LaShaune P. Johnson is an Assistant Professor in the Master of Public Health program at Creighton University, as well as a Faculty Associate for Creighton’s Master of Medical Anthropology program. She completed her undergraduate degree in Sociology and Medieval/Renaissance Studies at Wellesley College and her PhD in Sociology at University of California-Santa Barbara. After completing her degree, she completed an NIDDK postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Connecticut’s Ethel Donaghue Center for Translating Research into Practice and Policy (TRIPP). After that, she was a postdoc at the University of Missouri School of Health Professions. During this time, she was a co-Investigator on a Komen-funded Black breast cancer project, “Walking in the Spirit” and also served as a researcher on the Active Living Research funded—“Playgrounds without Borders” project. In her time at Creighton, she was the co-chair (with the late Jackie Hill) of the Metro African American Breast Cancer Task Force, which developed a peer education program now being adapted across the state. She has also co-designed (with Kiran Choudhry, at University of Missouri) two American Academy of Pediatrics-funded projects about medical homes and maternal/child health in the Muslim community in Central Missouri; this project also uses a peer educator model. Recently, she completed a year of training in evaluation as a member of the inaugural class of the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s LEEAD program; has participated in developmental evaluations, and has been selected to co-facilitate culturally responsive evaluation training. She continues her interests in cultural competence, cancer and child health, and currently has a Creighton Haddix grant to study Black LGBTQ cancer screening experiences.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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HDRTP 2017
**University of South
Alabama**

Dr. Loretta Jones is an Assistant Professor of Nursing at the University of South Alabama. She received her PhD in Nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Her research focus is understanding health disparities in African American women with heart disease. She has investigated life style changes of African American women after experiencing a heart attack. Currently, she is interested in examining exercise patterns, barriers, and facilitators of physical of African American women in health disparity zip codes in the Deep South. This research will assist in designing cultural tailored interventions for this specific population.



Sanjay Kumar, PhD
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HDRTP 2017
**Alabama State U/UAB
Partnership**

Dr. Sanjay Kumar received his PhD degree in the area of Tumor Immunology in Oct 2013 from one of the India's best research institution, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India. After his PhD, Dr. Kumar received prestigious Dr. D.S. Kothari postdoctoral fellowship awarded by the University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi, India. In May 2015, he moved to the United States for further postdoctoral training in the Cancer Biology Research and Training program at Alabama State University, Montgomery, AL.

Dr. Kumar started his journey in Tumor Immunology with a unique tumor model Dalton's lymphoma (Non-Hodgkin lymphoma, NHL). In the human population, NHL frequency is such that it accounts 70% cases among different type of lymphoma in the USA. In this context, Dalton's lymphoma (DL) is unique murine tumor model to study anti-cancer molecular mechanism(s) involved in lymphoma growth. One of the mechanisms that DL cells adapt is a high level of heat shock proteins (HSP). During his PhD, he worked on the topic entitled "Molecular Mechanism of Protein Kinase C Inhibition on the Expression of hsp70 and Apoptotic Factors in a Murine T cell Lymphoma (Dalton's Lymphoma)". His PhD work has been published in several international journals of high repute.

At Alabama State University, Dr. Kumar is working under the supervision of Dr. Manoj Mishra. His main focus is investigation of the role of immune cells in prostate cancer progression and clearance. Dr. Kumar is also involved in the elucidation of the role polymeric scaffold in bone tissue regeneration and role of dietary compounds in prostate cancer therapy. Dr. Kumar also trains graduate, undergraduate and high school students during academic year in cancer research.



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HDRTP 2017
RCMAR

Dr. Junfei Lu obtained his PhD in Rehabilitation Counselor Education Program from the University of Iowa. He is currently an Assistant Professor at the rehabilitation counseling program in the department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research, Methodology, and Counseling, University of Alabama, where he teaches online courses in group counseling, career counseling, multicultural counseling, etc. His primary research interests are in the area of resilience, particularly as that relates to spirituality and mindfulness. He also conducts research in counseling identity and competence development and attitudes toward people with disabilities.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDRTP 2017
RCMAR**

Dr. Mercy Mumba is an Assistant Professor at the University of Alabama Capstone College of Nursing. She graduated with her Honors Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Texas at Arlington College of Nursing and Health Innovation in 2010. She received her Medical Surgical certification from the Medical Surgical Nursing Certification Board in 2013. In 2016, Dr. Mumba graduated with her PhD in Nursing with a concentration in education and research.

Dr. Mumba has an extensive clinical background, both in acute care and long-term care. She has assumed many leadership and administrative roles both in the clinical setting and academia. Her experience in academia includes lecture experiences and clinical supervision of students. Her academic areas of expertise include holistic health assessment, fundamentals of nursing, and nursing research. Dr. Mumba has won several notable awards, including the Rising Star Award from Nurses.com in their Giving Excellence Meaning awards. She is a recipient of many scholarships and fellowships from the University of Texas at Arlington, Texas Health Resources, and Sigma Theta Tau International. Dr. Mumba has further received many leadership and mentoring awards, including the Deans Mentoring Award from the University of Texas at Arlington.

Dr. Mumba is an innovative researcher who is well versed in both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Her primary research area of focus is substance abuse among nurses and their psychosocial wellbeing. Her other research interest include self-efficacy and functional status in older adults and how these relate to healthy aging and wellness.



Gillian Noel, MD, MS
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**HDRTP 2017
NRMN**

Dr. Gillian Noel, Assistant Professor, Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition, earned her medical degree from the University of Colorado School of Medicine. Dr. Noel completed her pediatric residency and Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition fellowship at the Children's Hospital Colorado, University of Colorado School of Medicine. In addition, Dr. Noel earned her Masters of Science in Clinical Science from the University of Colorado Graduate School at the Colorado Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute. She joined UAB in 2017 after completing a Pediatric Transplant Hepatology/Advanced Hepatology Fellowship at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Emory University School of Medicine. Her clinical/research interests include pediatric liver allograft survival and health disparities, specifically the impact of culturally responsive medical care on chronic disease management and outcomes.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Alaba Oludare, PhD
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HDRTP 2017
Jackson State U

Dr. Alaba Oludare obtained her PhD in administration of justice from Texas Southern University. She also holds a Master's Degree in Tax Law from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa. Dr. Oludare has worked with underserved populations of first generation college students and communities to improve the quality of life through research, service and teaching. Her research interests include socio-economic aspects of crime and disease; crime prevention and administration of social control programs and policies; and cybercrimes prevention and law enforcement.



William Opoku-Agyeman, PhD, MPH, MS
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HDRTP 2017
RCMAR

Dr. William Opoku-Agyeman is currently an Assistant Professor with the Department of Health Services Administration at the University of Alabama. His research interest includes; an aspect of financial management in healthcare, and strategies specifically about the supply chain, hospital purchasing alliance, Information technology exchanges across healthcare systems, hospital's population management and location of health care organizations as a function of strategy. William holds a Master's of Science Degree in Geographic Information Science from the University of Akron, Ohio, and Masters in Public Health from Kent State University in Ohio. He also graduated from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Natural Resource Management in Ghana, West Africa.



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HDRTP 2017
Alabama State
University/UAB
Partnership

Dr. Luz A. Padilla is a physician from Mexico, she received her MD from the Universidad de Guadalajara and obtained a MSPH in Applied Epidemiology from the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she was awarded Outstanding Master student of the year from the SOPH. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Epidemiology, course master for both undergraduate and graduate level courses, and serves as a medical and data analyst consultant for the Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) study. She is part of UAB's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Minority Health International Research Training (MHIRT) committees. She is passionate about health disparities, minority research and education. She has helped train students in research and conduct infectious and chronic diseases (Diabetes, CKD, Cancer, HIV, HPV, TB, HTLV-1, etc), nutritional and maternal and child health studies internationally in countries such as Swaziland, Zambia, Ghana, Jamaica, Guatemala, Peru and Mexico.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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**HDRTP 2017
NRMN**

Dr. Trisha Parekh is an Instructor in the Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, and Critical Care Medicine at UAB. Dr. Parekh's clinical research focuses on the health outcomes and healthcare utilization of the COPD population. Her interests include identifying specific social determinants of health that lead to adverse health outcomes, increased healthcare costs, and health related disparities. She is also interested in community based interventions, such as community health workers, that may help improve the burden of disease in COPD patients.



Brandi Pernell, DNP
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**HDRTP 2017
NRMN**

Dr. Brandi Pernell is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics within the Division of Hematology/ Oncology at UAB. Her research interests include clinical and translational research in children with sickle cell disease and comorbid pulmonary complications, such as asthma, sleep-disordered breathing and pulmonary hypertension. She is currently focused on the social determinants of lung disease in SCD, as well as patient-centered strategies for improving patient and family disease management amidst poor determinants of health.



Pawan Puri, PhD, DVM
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**HDRTP 2017
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Partnership**

Dr. Pawan Puri is an Assistant Professor of Physiology in the Department of Biomedical Sciences at Tuskegee University College of Veterinary Medicine. He obtained his bachelor's degree in veterinary science and animal husbandry (BVSc & AH) (~DVM) from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, India. He received his PhD in reproductive physiology and endocrinology from Kent State University, Ohio and conducted his postdoctoral work at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. His research focuses on signaling mechanisms regulating kidney development and renal dysplasia. He is also interested in signaling mechanisms that regulate male fertility and to determine the genetic basis of infertility.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



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HDRTP 2017

NRMN

Dr. Kevin R. Riggs is an Assistant Professor in the Division of Preventive Medicine at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He completed his undergraduate studies at Georgia Tech and then earned his MPH from UNC Chapel Hill and his MD at Duke. He trained in internal medicine at Duke and then completed a research fellowship at Johns Hopkins. He practices general internal medicine at the Birmingham VA Medical Center. He conducts health services research focused on overuse of health care services, and he is interested in identifying strategies to reduce disparities in several clinical settings including the evaluation of hematuria and treatment of acute and chronic pain.



Nicole Ruggiano, PhD, MSW

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RCMAR

Dr. Nicole Ruggiano is an Associate Professor within the School of Social Work at the University of Alabama, in Tuscaloosa. She has earned a PhD in Urban Affairs and Public Policy from the University of Delaware and an MSW (Social Work) from Temple University. Dr. Ruggiano's research focuses on decision making and management of health and support services for older adults with chronic conditions. Currently, her work aims to develop and test mobile information technologies that are culturally and regionally sensitive and support family caregivers of adults with dementia. She is particularly interested in developing technology-based interventions that support caregivers in rural communities and for those who are racial and ethnic minorities. Dr. Ruggiano has also conducted research on health self-management among older adults with chronic conditions.



Yasemin Turkman, PhD, MPH, MS, MEd, MA

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RCMAR

Dr. Yasemin Turkman is an assistant professor at the UAB School of Nursing where she teaches in her clinical specialty, psychiatric mental health nursing. Dr. Turkman's research interests are in health disparities in palliative care and psychosocial oncology. She is currently pursuing research in the access and use of palliative care by older African Americans with advanced cancer in the Deep South. Previously, Dr. Turkman examined the experiences and psychosocial needs of women diagnosed with triple negative breast cancer, a subtype that disproportionately affects African American and young women. Her research has been funded by the American Cancer Society, Susan G. Komen for the Cure Disparities Program, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing/Johnson & Johnson.

2017 Health Disparities Research Training Program (HDRTP) SCHOLAR DIRECTORY



Theresa Wadas, PhD, DNP, MS

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**HDRTP 2017
RCMAR**

Dr. Theresa Wadas is an assistant professor at the University of Alabama Capstone College of Nursing. She received her PhD in nursing from the University of Arizona and her DNP from the University of Southern Indiana. Dr. Wadas is board certified as a family and acute care nurse practitioner and a fellow in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. Her research trajectory focuses on health disparities in three main areas: cellular aging, cardiovascular disease, and psychosocial mechanisms associated with stress physiology among minority and/or underserved populations. Dr. Wadas' research goals are to:

1. To develop methods that measure and model complexities of physiological and psychosocial relationship systems as it pertains to cellular aging and cardiovascular disease.
2. To use such models to understand the intersection of cellular aging and physiological and the psychosocial context of individuals and families at risk for developing and/or advancing cardiovascular disease.
3. To translate these findings into effective individual, family, and/or community interventions among minority and/or underserved populations.



Pariya Fazeli Wheeler, PhD

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Dr. Pariya Fazeli Wheeler is an Assistant Professor in the UAB School of Nursing. She is an experimental psychologist with academic training in lifespan development, cognitive aging, and gerontology. Her primary research interests include cognitive aging among older adults with HIV, with a focus on predictors of successful cognitive aging as well as rehabilitation strategies to promote successful cognitive aging in this population. Her work is currently funded by the National Institute on Aging.