



Carolyn M. Tucker, PhD

***Past, Present, and Future Translational Research
to Address Health Disparities***

**(See more substantive Research Summaries at
www.UFHealthDisparities.med.ufl.edu)**

Specific Research Themes: Customized, Culturally Sensitive Health Promotion and Health Care; Integrating Health Promotion in Medicine; and the Development and Testing of Community Health Worker Training Programs Focusing on Health Promotion.

Research Frameworks: Health Self-Empowerment Theory and Community Health Empowerment Theory.

Primary Research Participants: Racial/ethnic minority individuals and families (mostly those who identify as African American/Black or Hispanic/Latino), individuals with low household incomes, the medically underserved in rural/urban communities, and health care providers and medical students.

Current Academic/Research Positions at UF: Richard and Thelma O. C. Barney Endowed Term Professor of Health Disparities in the College of Medicine; Professor of Psychology; Clinical Psychologist; Professor of Community Health and Family Medicine; Affiliate Professor of Pediatrics; Research Foundation Professor; Distinguished Alumni Professor; and Director of the UF Health Disparities Research and Intervention Program.

Current Grants: (1) **PI** (with Dr. Odedina) for the UF-FAMU Community Health Workers Research and Training Institute in Florida; (2) **PI** for the Bronx Health-Smart Church Project, and (3) **Co-I** (Dr. Logan, PI) for the NIDCR center grant that funds the Southeast Center for Research to Reduce Disparities in Oral Health.

Past and Present Research: I have spent most of my 33-year academic career conducting translational research with the aim of eliminating health disparities. My research to achieve this aim involves conducting two long-term, interdisciplinary, community-based participatory research programs, both of which have the mission of promoting individual and community health empowerment to promote health and prevent disease in at-risk communities. Both of these research programs specifically involve defining, assessing, and testing culturally sensitive interventions to increase *health-smart* behaviors (i.e., health promoting behaviors such as consuming a healthy diet and engaging in regular physical activity) and reduce health risk behaviors among individuals and families. As in the past, I am presently focusing on preventing and reducing the incidence and severity of obesity, hypertension, and type 2 diabetes, and promoting treatment adherence through health empowerment.

One of my research programs is the ***Culturally Sensitive Health Promotion Research Program***. A core aspect of this Program is developing and testing my Health-Smart Behavior (HSB) Program (anchored in my published Health Self-Empowerment Theory), which embraces both individual and community health empowerment. My HSB Program is designed to promote healthy lifestyles by increasing health-smart behaviors and reducing health risk behaviors. The HSB Program has been institutionalized in 11 churches (the

Health-Smart Church Program) and in YMCAs. Significant outcomes of this research program include: (a) the published *Motivators of and Barriers to Health-Smart Behaviors Inventory*, which is a *landmark* health behavior assessment tool; (b) an evidence-based Family Health Self-Empowerment DVD; and (c) other user-friendly tools for use by community members to institutionalize the HSB Program in churches and other community sites.

My other research program is the ***Patient-Centered, Culturally Sensitive Health Care (PC-CSHC) Research Program***. Significant outcomes of this Program include: (a) a published article on the definition of cultural sensitivity as defined by culturally/racially diverse primary care patients (via focus groups); (b) an evidence-based PC-CSHC Theoretical Model (reported in a published article) that explains the relationship between provider cultural sensitivity and patients' health behaviors and outcomes; (c) the PC-CSHC Inventory for patients to evaluate the cultural sensitivity of their providers and clinic office staff; and d) a published article on the PC-CSHC–Provider Form for providers and medical students to self-evaluate their cultural sensitivity as defined by patients (this article includes the listed self-evaluation tools and training implications for providers).

Future Research Projects: My future translational research will focus on:

- (a) establishing and evaluating the impact of customized, community-based/participatory, health empowerment/promotion research and intervention *centers* at racial/ethnic minority churches and community centers (e.g., YMCAs) throughout Florida;
- (b) assessing the motivators of and barriers to health-smart behaviors in schools, and using these data to customize and test the effects of school-based health-smart behavior programs on childhood obesity;
- (c) developing culturally sensitive inventories (one for children and one for adults) to assess what motivates avoidance of health risk behaviors that can be used to inform health risk reduction programs for children/adolescents and adults;
- (d) training health care providers as health empowerment coaches and assessing the impact of this training on the providers' health behaviors, BMI, and blood pressure—and also on their patients' health behaviors, BMI, and blood pressure (i.e., implementing and testing the effectiveness of Health-Smart Clinics);
- (e) further examining the associations between psychological/mental health and illness on obesity and health behaviors; and
- (f) adapting my health promotion and health care assessment inventories and my Health-Smart Behavior Program for use via patient health information technology modalities, and evaluating the impact of using these adapted inventories and interventions on patients' and providers' health behaviors and health outcomes.

Finally, I am the Contact PI and Center Director in the recently-submitted NIMHD Comprehensive Centers of Excellence grant proposal to establish the *Florida Health Disparities Translational Research Center*. I am also the PI for several grant proposals submitted or in progress in the areas of community-based, culturally sensitive health promotion and/or health care to address obesity, hypertension, and/or type 2 diabetes.