



Ten Years of Faith and Science Coming Together: Celebrating a Decade of Engagement



Members of the historic African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church partner with the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation to promote clinical research in communities of color.

In 2010, a group from Yale reached out to leaders of the AME Zion Church to help them solve a problem that had long been occurring in the medical community: the lack of minority participation in clinical research. Ten years later and counting, the Cultural Ambassadors are going strong: they are growing.

This first meeting led to the development of the Cultural Ambassador Program, a partnership with Junta for Progressive Action (Junta) and the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AME Zion). Junta for Progressive Action's mission is to provide services, programs, and advocacy that improve the social, political, and economic conditions of the Latino community in greater New Haven. The AME Zion Church is one of the oldest African American congregations in the United States.

The major purpose of the Cultural Ambassador Program is to help ensure YCCI's clinical research reflects the diversity of New Haven's population and directly offers benefits to the local community. Together, with Yale, the Ambassadors educate the community about how disease affects people in their

communities, and the importance of participating in clinical research.

The Cultural Ambassadors act as expert resources, advising Yale investigators how best to raise awareness about clinical research. The Cultural Ambassadors have also assisted YCCI in developing its "Help Us Discover" clinical trials awareness multimedia campaign that is designed to promote Yale clinical research and recruit a broad spectrum of volunteers to participate in clinical research. The Ambassadors were also instrumental in the development of educational brochures intended to educate the community about the benefits and

safeguards of clinical research participation while also addressing misconceptions.

In addition to its bus and commuter train posters seen all around New Haven, the "Help Us Discover" campaign has grown to include new strategies including appearances on the Tom Ficklin Radio Show and Telemundo, as well as a broadening social media presence. In 2015, the program was greatly enhanced by integration of Yale's electronic health record (EHR), which helped patients learn about and engage in clinical trials while receiving health care at Yale.



The 10th Anniversary Gala was held in February 2020 to acknowledge the many accomplishments of the Yale Cultural Ambassadors including the contributions of Help Us Discover Heroes.

"The gala was a monumental occasion." – Rev. Dr. Perry

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Editor in chief: Reverend Dr. Leroy O. Perry
Reverend Elvin Clayton

Written by: Jeanna Lucci-Canapari

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Ten Years of Faith and Science Coming Together *(continued)*

In the past ten years, the Cultural Ambassadors have made a clear impact on the diversity of clinical research at Yale. When the partnership was launched, only between two and four percent of total enrollment in clinical trials at Yale included people of color. In 2021, more than 31 percent of total enrollment was participants from communities of color. And in the past five years, studies that engaged the Cultural Ambassadors can report approximately 61 percent of total enrollment from underrepresented communities. This represents a combination of therapeutic (52 percent) and non-therapeutic studies (67 percent).

In its second decade, the Cultural Ambassadors Program continues to grow. The Ambassadors have been essential in educating communities of color in New Haven about COVID-19 by hosting virtual town halls to educate people about the virus and the importance of vaccines; participating in pop-up clinics; going door-to-door with information; distributing food and PPE; and serving as examples to their communities by getting vaccinated and protecting themselves from the virus.

The Ambassadors have also been part of efforts to engage young people in clinical research not only as participants, but through careers in research: the Young Cultural Ambassadors program was launched last year, as well as new internship programs for students to expose them to the potential of careers in research.

Just before the pandemic struck in March of 2020, the community came together at the Omni in New Haven to celebrate the YCCI Cultural Ambassadors Program's decade of service to the community, and look forward to the decade to come. At the Gala, the Cultural Ambassadors were honored for their years of service and dedication to their communities. Also celebrated were patients for their crucial participation in clinical trials at Yale.

“The 10th Anniversary Celebration and Gala was an awakening to many of us. We appreciated the announcement of awards that were given because it brought awareness and importance to the work being done at YCCI. The food was excellent and the place was elegant. I’m thankful for the opportunity to have been a participant.” – Rev. Carolyn Rogers



“The YCCI Gala was a grand affair that celebrated those individuals who have dedicated themselves to the work of clinical research in an elegant way.” – Vanessa Clayton



“The gala was very enjoyable. It was nice to see the different groups gathering to take pictures. The food and venue was great.” – Tanaya Henry

Summit

The gala celebration day was kicked off by the second Innovation and Diversity Summit which brought together stakeholders from the community, government, industry, and academia to discuss innovation in the promotion of clinical trial diversity. This year's summit focused on Patient-Centered Care and Research, and featured speakers and panel discussions on raising awareness of the need for minorities and underrepresented groups to participate in clinical trials, patient-centered approaches to health care, and the role of technology in achieving these goals. The summit was a collaboration between the Yale School of Medicine and its partners: the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Office of Minority Health and Health Equity and the YCCI Cultural Ambassadors.



Luther T. Clark, MD, FACC, FACP, the Deputy Chief Patient Officer and Global Director, Scientific Medical and Patient Perspective (SMPP) in the Office of the Chief Patient Officer (OCPO) at Merck, chairs a panel discussion on how industry can partner with stakeholders to achieve diverse participation in research.

The summit highlighted a partnership between the FDA and YCCI, whose memorandum of understanding facilitates collaboration between the two organizations in finding innovative ways to correct the historic skepticism held by many minority communities regarding clinical research by encouraging minorities to participate, and pursue careers in the health professions.

“We are always trying to work with those who have achieved success in advancing minority participation in clinical trials,” said RADM Richardae Araujo, PharmD, the FDA's associate commissioner for minority health. The partnership will engage the talents of YCCI's successful Cultural Ambassadors Program, which partners with members of minority communities to provide feedback on clinical trial communications and protocols, in order to make them more culturally competent.



Help Us Discover Heroes: Reverend Clayton and Reverend Perry



Photo by Robert A. Lisak

Reverend Elvin Clayton, Pastor, Walter's Memorial AME Zion Church, Bridgeport and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research Program

Rev. Elvin Clayton joined the COVID-19 vaccine trial which sought to assess the efficacy and safety of the vaccine for the prevention of disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

Much like the rest of the world, I have been very aware of just how serious the COVID-19 pandemic is – a health crisis in need of immediate action with African Americans dying at twice the rate and hospitalized at almost three times that of our white counterparts. So, when I was given the opportunity to participate in the vaccine trial to fight the SARS-CoV-2 virus, I knew right away that it was my inherent duty as a community leader to sign up. As a Yale Cultural Ambassador and pastor for Walter's Memorial AME Zion Church, it felt like such a significant way to further encourage members of my community to participate right alongside me, to drive health equity in our own community and advance science at the same time.

I have participated in a few studies over the years. I feel strongly that you have to be willing to be a part of research in order to make change. I have to admit, this time was different, not just because of the devastating impact COVID-19 has had on my community, but also because I asked my wife to join the study too. Asking my wife, Vanessa, to join was not a difficult decision, but I did give it more thought than usual. Like most people, we always have some concern about any medical procedure, but it is so incredibly important that as many people as possible participate for this vaccine to be relevant in all communities, and especially people from minority groups. So, we spoke about it together. We considered that eligible participants for the study would receive either a placebo or the study vaccine and neither the volunteers, the staff, nor scientists knew which. We asked questions of the Principal Investigator, Dr. Onyema Ogbuagu, about what would

happen if we didn't get the vaccine as part of the study if the vaccine later received FDA approval. Most importantly, we wanted to understand the safety data. We discussed the informed consent with Dr. Ogbuagu, who was great in answering all our questions and addressing all of our concerns. He really just put us at ease about our participation. He also told us participants would later find out if they had gotten the real vaccine or placebo and those who had gotten the placebo would be first in line to receive the vaccine once the FDA approved it. We both decided we had to participate because we felt that as many people as possible need to participate for this vaccine to be relevant in all communities.

In January 2021 when study participants were informed whether they had received the placebo or the vaccine, we had a mixed blessing. We found out Vanessa got the placebo and I got the real vaccine as part of the study. When I was told that I had been given the vaccine as opposed to the placebo, my first thought was "hallelujah." I wanted to shout from the nearest mountain top.

And although we were both disappointed about Vanessa receiving the placebo, we knew this was a part of the importance of discovery and celebrated that at least one of us got the vaccine. Even though my wife didn't get it during the trial, she says she has no regrets and plans to get vaccinated as soon as she is offered the opportunity.

"You have to be willing to be a part of research in order to make a change."

– Rev. Clayton

I decided to write this, and we both decided to share our stories, because people of color need to understand that we have to participate in the research so we know whether drugs and devices are going to be effective for all of us. COVID has hit our people hard and I have presided over too many funerals as a result; I want everyone to know people who looked like them participated in the vaccine trial. I participated. My wife and my friends participated. Like Vanessa, your participation may not help you, but it may help your children, your grandchildren, your sister or brother, or people you don't even know. And as for this study and the vaccines which have now been approved, I just feel if we want to hug our families again, if we want our communities to not just survive but to thrive, we have to get vaccinated.

Rev. Dr. Leroy Perry joined the COVID-19 vaccine trial which sought to assess the efficacy and safety of the vaccine for the prevention of disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2).

I spoke with the principal investigator to learn more about the study, but even without that courtesy, I was pretty sure that I would be inviting members of my family and community to participate with me. I asked my daughter, Megan Perry, to volunteer alongside me. Yes, I worried that she, being from the younger and less affected generation, might see the vaccine differently and decline to join me. Fortunately, that wasn't the case; Megan was able to see the trial for what it was – a chance to help herself, her community, and the advancement of science. She trusts my judgement and expertise implicitly and was thrilled to help with research that could potentially protect and save millions of people. I also asked several of my parishioners to volunteer for the study.

Minority groups have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and that was a major motivation for me to participate. When you are a part of a population that is severely affected, it's more critical than ever to do something about it. None of the volunteers or scientists and administrators knew who got the vaccine and who got a placebo. We were promised that those who received placebos during the trial would be first in line for the real thing upon FDA approval of the vaccine. That was not my motivation, but it reassured me that the researchers had my best interest at heart.

In January 2021, the study was unblinded and I discovered that I had received the actual vaccine as opposed to the placebo; I can't describe the "joy that flooded my soul." I felt a peace that was indescribable not only for me, but one that I could extend to my family.

I always carefully consider the value of every clinical trial I advocate for. It is so essential that these trials are actually going to benefit the community a volunteer lives in. As Ambassadors, we have to be incredibly vigilant when considering these studies. We have to weigh all the factors. Clinical trials contribute to society's health as a whole.

"When the study was unblinded, and I was told that I had been given the vaccine as opposed to the placebo, I can't describe the joy that flooded my soul." – Rev. Dr. Perry



Photo by Robert A. Lisak

Reverend Dr. Leroy O. Perry, Jr. Pastor, St. Stephens AME Zion Church, Branford and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

As an Ambassador and as pastor of St. Stephens AME Zion Church, I appealed to friends, family, and other members of my community to help them understand why they should also participate. I am completely sympathetic towards the skepticism most people have and think it is essential to promptly address doubts and concerns. Convincing just one person to participate in this trial can help so many others.

A Call for More COVID-19 Vaccine Funding and Praise for Yale's Achievements | by Robert Forman



Photo by Harold Shapiro

Senator Blumenthal with Yale Scientists. Senator Richard Blumenthal praises COVID-19-related work by (l-r, rear) Saad Omer, Ellen Foxman, Akiko Iwasaki, Richard Bucala, and Onyema Ogbuagu.

On July 24, United States Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) highlighted research conducted at Yale School of Medicine and urged his Senate colleagues to approve more federal funding for development and distribution of vaccines to halt the COVID-19 pandemic. Speaking on the school's Harkness Lawn, Blumenthal said, "Our nation will not go back to anything like normal. We will not reopen our economy, we will not have Americans feeling safe and secure without a vaccine. It's that simple."

Blumenthal urged passage of a piece of COVID-19 relief legislation called the HEROES act, which, in addition to providing new relief to those hurt economically by the pandemic, would dedicate another \$10 billion to moving the nation closer to having safe and effective vaccines. He also praised the science and clinical care taking place at Yale, as well as the university's efforts to ensure that members of often underserved communities have equal access to both the vaccine development process and the ultimate distribution of vaccines.

Nancy J. Brown, MD, the Jean and David W. Wallace Dean of the School of Medicine and C.N.H. Long Professor of Internal Medicine, welcomed Blumenthal and recounted what Yale has accomplished to battle the pandemic. Brown cited unprecedented collaboration within Yale among faculty and leaders with varied areas of expertise, and she noted its positive impact. "Since infection peaked in Connecticut," Brown pointed out, "we have been, as you know, one of the most successful states in reducing rates of infection. I think that reflects our teamwork."

One promising scientific effort is being led by Richard Bucala, MD,

PhD, Waldemar Von Zedtwitz Professor of Medicine (Rheumatology), and professor of pathology and of epidemiology (microbial diseases). When the spread of H1N1 flu reached dangerous levels in 2009, scientists began work on an anti-viral vaccine, but did not have time to perfect it before that epidemic subsided. Bucala is now picking up with COVID-19 where those and other researchers left off. The mechanism of the vaccine he is developing is based on a self-amplifying RNA, which lends itself to being reproduced on a mass scale, and has previously shown promise against viruses. At the news conference, Bucala called it "a platform that can be rapidly developed and easily deployed, so that there can be many vaccinations and no [manufacturing and distribution] bottleneck."

Simultaneously at Yale, Onyema Ogbuagu, MD, associate professor of medicine, is leading Yale's COVID vaccine clinical trials to help determine the safety and

effectiveness of another RNA vaccine, which the pharmaceutical company Pfizer plans to distribute if it gains Food and Drug Administration approval. The phase 3 study's particular focus is how



Photo by Harold Shapiro

A Greeting from the Dean. Dean Nancy J. Brown welcomes Senator Richard Blumenthal to Yale School of Medicine.

safe and effective the vaccine would be inclusive of older people and with a focus on equitable enrollment of ethnic and racial minorities.

One imperative Yale has as the science progresses is to be sure that all populations have a role in evaluating vaccines, and will have equal access to approved vaccines when that time comes. Saad B. Omer, MBBS, MPH, PhD, director of the Yale Institute for Global Health, noted how "trials that are led by Yale are conducted in some of the most diverse populations in the country." Diversity is essential, he said, to

"Since infection peaked in Connecticut, we have been, as you know, one of the most successful states in reducing rates of infection. I think that reflects our teamwork."

– Dean Nancy J. Brown



Photo by Harold Shapiro

Highlighting Minorities' Participation. Rev. Dr. Perry, describes the need for Yale and communities of color to battle COVID-19 together.

have trial results that are generalizable to the populations most impacted by this outbreak. "In the context of vaccines," Omer explained, "some of the work at Yale, and others' work as well, has clearly elicited the differential impact of COVID-19, not just by age but by background and socioeconomic status and a disproportionate impact on the communities of color."

Reverend Dr. Leroy O. Perry, Jr., pastor of St. Stephens AME Zion Church in Branford, has played a primary role in connecting Yale scientists with greater New Haven's African American community. Perry's role as a Cultural Ambassador has included explaining to members of his community why volunteering for clinical trials will benefit them.

"Nobody can tell our story for us. And they need to hear from religious leaders and members of the community to just reinforce for them, without suspicion, that what we're doing is for the good of all of us, and particularly for people of color."

– Rev. Dr. Perry

Over the past decade, Cultural Ambassadors have worked closely with Yale researchers, listening to and evaluating research proposals while advising Yale scientists on how best to shape their studies so they will be well received in the community. All agreed this collaboration may never be more essential than during the COVID-19 emergency.

Also highlighted by Dean Brown at the session was the work of Akiko Iwasaki, PhD, Waldemar Von Zedtwitz Professor of Immunobiology and professor of molecular, cellular, and developmental biology, who is studying how some aspects of the body's immune response might lessen the effects of COVID-19, while some might exacerbate them – as well as that of Ellen F. Foxman, MD, PhD, assistant professor of laboratory medicine and immunobiology, whose efforts have included enhancing tools to diagnose COVID-19.

Have You Gotten Your COVID-19 Vaccine?

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Photo by Kristin Hynes / Yale New Haven Health

Rev. Clayton of Walter's Memorial AME Zion Church in Bridgeport participated in the clinical trial for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, attests to the vaccine's safety and urges everyone to get vaccinated.

Misconceptions about the coronavirus and vaccination persist as we mark the 18th month of a pandemic that has infected more than 34 million people in the U.S. and claimed over 610,000 American lives. Many of those who recover experience ongoing health issues – even if they didn't require hospitalization.

"There is a misconception that just older people or those with underlying conditions suffer complications from COVID-19, but that is simply not true", said John-Ross Clarke, MD, chief medical resident, Bridgeport Hospital. *"The virus can have effects in people who were asymptomatic (never had symptoms) and didn't know they had the virus. I have particularly seen this in young people."*

Vaccination is the way forward in returning to normal, Dr. Clarke explained. *"Especially with new variants that are circulating in Connecticut, the more people who get vaccinated, the more people who will be protected against these more contagious strains."*

All three vaccines approved for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration are highly effective at preventing severe illness from all variants of COVID-19 that have been identified in the state.

Reverend Elvin Clayton knows the importance of vaccination during a pandemic. The pastor of Walter's Memorial AME Zion Church in Bridgeport encourages as many people as possible to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

"This is what we all have to do to beat this thing," he said. *"The best and fastest way to get there is for all of us to get vaccinated."*

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Have You Gotten Your COVID-19 Vaccine? (continued)

One common misconception is that the COVID-19 vaccines were “rushed” and not vetted properly. Not true, says Gregory Buller, MD, associate chief medical officer and chair of medicine, Bridgeport Hospital. *“Researchers spent years developing the technology that would make these vaccines possible,” he said. “When called upon for an inoculation specifically for COVID-19, the manufacturers created their vaccines and studied them with the same rigor as others. Yale New Haven Health participated in the final phase, Phase 3, of the Pfizer vaccine’s clinical trial, so we saw first-hand the thoroughness of the study.”*

Reverend Clayton was a participant in the Phase 3 clinical trial, in which participants didn’t know if they receive the vaccine or a placebo. As a Cultural Ambassador for the Yale School of Medicine, he understands the importance of including people of different ethnic backgrounds as clinical trial participants. The Cultural Ambassadors program educates leaders of New Haven’s African American and Latino populations about clinical trials.

“I made up my mind early on that I would be a part of the COVID-19 study because I thought it was a necessary thing, especially for people of color,” he said. “I didn’t have any doubts because I knew the scientists behind the vaccine study were putting everything they had into making it safe and effective.”

Reverend Clayton wondered if he received the placebo during the clinical trial because he didn’t experience any side effects. When Pfizer released the results of the study months later, he discovered he was one of the participants who received the vaccine.

Even after telling people about his experience in the Pfizer trial and sharing vaccine facts, Reverend Clayton says some people are still hesitant. He understands, and offers some advice:

“Listen to the scientists. Have a conversation with your doctor and look at the number of people this disease has taken from us,” he said. “I am a pastor, not a doctor, but in my opinion, you have two choices – get the vaccine or get the virus. I think our choice should be to get the vaccine.”

To learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine, visit bridgeporthospital.org.

Getting Vaccines to All | by Jeanna Lucci-Canapari



Onyema Ogbuagu, MBBCh, FACP, FIDSA explained the development of the authorized COVID-19 vaccines.

African-American and Latino communities are three times more likely to be hospitalized for COVID-19, and are twice as likely to die from it. These are facts, but there also is a great deal of inaccurate information online and in the media about COVID-19 and the vaccines that are designed to fight it. To help dispel some of the misinformation, a panel of Yale experts participated in a webinar on March 3, 2021 which answered questions from the public, addressing their concerns and underlining the importance of vaccination in the African American and Latino communities. Nancy J. Brown, MD, Jean and David W. Wallace Dean and C.N.H. Long Professor of Internal Medicine, served as moderator and guided the discussion of an expert panel both from Yale and the federal government.

The webinar was hosted by the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation (YCCI), which facilitates the conduct of clinical research at Yale with support from the federal Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) program, and representatives from its Cultural Ambassadors Program. The program is a bidirectional effort between YCCI and YSM to improve minority participation in clinical trials, which has been historically low. Much of this is due to a mistrust of the medical establishment within minority communities. “Cultural Ambassadors acknowledge past issues in research,” said Tesheia Harris, Associate Director for Clinical Research for YSM and deputy director and chief operating officer of YCCI. “Tuskegee did happen. Henrietta Lacks did happen. But one of the important messages is that regulatory change happened as [a result] of that mistrust.” Cultural Ambassadors alert people about opportunities to participate in research safely that may not only benefit their own health, but the health of their communities.

Two Cultural Ambassadors, Reverend Dr. Leroy O. Perry, Jr., pastor of St. Stephens AME Zion Church in Branford, and Reverend Elvin Clayton, pastor of Walter’s Memorial AME Zion Church in Bridgeport, both participated in the clinical trial for the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine in August. *“We participated in the clinical trial so that we could say to our communities that this is an important step for all of us,”* said Reverend Perry. *“We wanted to have them see that we believed enough in it to take it, and that it was safe, and that it was critical for our community that has been impacted in such a dramatic way.”*

“One of the things we have been trying to suggest to our community is that we need to take charge of our health. We don’t often look at the people on the bottom, who have a feeling of hopelessness.”

– Rev. Dr. Perry

“I did this because there were few people of color early on that participated,” said Rev. Clayton. In order to be successful, we need all populations to take part, not only in this study, but all studies. [When the trial] was unblinded and I found out I got the actual vaccine, it was a happy day.”

The Value of Vaccines

Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD, MS, associate dean for health equity research and associate professor of internal medicine (general medicine), of epidemiology (chronic disease), and of public health (social and behavioral sciences) – who now leads the White House health equity task force – emphasized that not only are Black and Brown communities hardest hit by the disease and its economic effects; early patterns in the gathered data have emerged that show that Black and Brown individuals are vaccinated at rates that don’t reflect their share of the general population.

Broadening access to vaccines and overcoming structural barriers to vaccines, such as lack of transportation and pharmacy deserts, are key to change. “We have to, in a conversation about vaccine confidence, also talk about vaccine access,” she said. “It has to be easy and convenient. When people are at “yes,” they have to connect with the vaccine.”



Marcella Nunez-Smith, MD, MHS, described the need for equity in vaccination efforts to fight COVID-19.

In addition to federal and state efforts to connect people to vaccines, such as setting up community vaccine centers and partnering with retail pharmacies, community organizations are crucial to making those connections that, as Nunez-Smith said, bring people to “yes.” A YCCI-sponsored pilot program taught seniors at St. Stephens AME Zion church via a Zoom seminar how to access health services online, including telemedicine visits, and connect with their doctors through email.

“One of the things we have been trying to suggest to our community is

that we need to take charge of our health,” said Perry. “We don’t often look at the people on the bottom, who have a feeling of hopelessness. And when it comes to matters of death, it is not of great importance to them. You have to reach out to these people and tell them they are important. You can be around if you take charge of your health. And the consequences not only affect you but your community.”

Harnessing the power of informatics has also been crucial to Yale’s efforts during the pandemic. “The EHR [electronic health record] has been powerful as a tool to help fight COVID-19,” said Allen Hsiao, MD, associate professor of pediatrics (emergency medicine) and chief medical information officer of YSM and YNH. Hsiao said that by employing the resources and information available in the EHR, Yale has been able to track hospital patients, geomap the course of the disease, and deploy resources such as personal protective equipment, as well as frontline caregivers, to the places they are needed most.

Yale New Haven Health has also set up a hotline, **833-ASK-YNH**, for vaccine information, as well as pop-up sites at the Bethel AME Church and Christian Tabernacle Baptist Church to help people obtain vaccines more easily, said Thomas Balczak, MD, associate clinical professor of internal medicine and chief clinical officer of YNH. Yale has also successfully piloted a “reverse 911” program that targets individuals in particular ZIP codes with higher rates of COVID-19 and prioritizing their place in the line to receive vaccines.

One question posed addressed the issue of vaccine access for undocumented immigrants and refugees, and whether personal data regarding immigration status would be asked for and collected by people seeking vaccines. “The answer is no,” said Nunez-Smith. “There are firewalls. None of the data collected go to Immigration. All vaccination sites are immigration enforcement-free zones. While early on, registration systems asked about citizenship, this is no longer the case,” she said.

“These are some of the specific structural barriers that have to be overcome,” said Nunez-Smith. “Communities are experts in what they need most. Stakeholder conversations made clear the concerns.”

Despite the challenges, there were many hopeful messages about the promise of change the new vaccines (“Count ‘em. Three!” said Nunez-Smith) could bring. “They are really highly effective uniformly across the board in preventing severe disease, hospitalizations, and deaths,” said Onyema Ogbuagu, MBBCh, who led clinical trials for vaccines, and presented an overview of the science behind the vaccines during the webinar. “That is really worth celebrating.”

“I tell all my friends, and all my congregants, I got the shot,” said Reverend Perry. “That’s good news, that’s gospel news. Marcella said to me once, it’s the vaccine or the virus. That’s the good news here.”



Photos by Robert A. Lisak

For the last decade, the Cultural Ambassadors Program of the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation (YCCI) has worked to bridge the gap between clinical research and the Black and Latin-X community. This mission continued during the rise of the novel coronavirus in 2020. As COVID-19 made its indelible impact around the world, communities of color in the United States experienced disproportionately more adverse effects compared to the rest of the population. The Cultural Ambassadors mobilized, and worked to inform their communities about COVID-19, and to help enact measures to improve health opportunities for those who have been historically marginalized.

One of the hallmarks of the Ambassadors' program has been the emphasis on education. Throughout the pandemic, Ambassadors met weekly with Yale medical staff to receive updates about the transmission of the virus, the launch of vaccine clinical trials, and access to the vaccines in underserved populations. The Ambassadors carried

these messages about wellness back to their community through virtual town halls, small group ZOOM calls, door-to-door canvassing, and phone conferences. Church leaders used Sunday morning services, Bible studies, and ministry meetings to spread the word about the importance of the vaccine. The Ambassadors partnered with the Tom Ficklin Radio Show to host a community health series that addressed vaccine hesitancy and provided information on how individuals can take control of their health. Ambassadors complete that communication loop by bringing the community voice back to the medical staff at Yale to inform their efforts. Ambassadors have advised Yale staff on effective messaging and reimbursement models that will engage potential research participants.

In addition to sharing information, the AME Zion churches affiliated with the Cultural Ambassadors Program offered their buildings as community-based vaccination clinics. This has ranged from

pop-up clinics to more frequent weekly clinics. These clinics serve a community that may have otherwise not had equal access to the shot. One Ambassador shared that there is a sense of relief and comfort for people when they walk through the doors of a trusted place and are greeted with a smile from a trusted community influence.

The pandemic exacerbated problems individuals faced pre-COVID-19 including housing instability, food insecurity, and mental health issues. The Ambassadors sought to address those needs as well. One church had a COVID-19 Crisis Counselor that met with church members and community residents to discuss how they have been impacted by the pandemic. During the interview, the counselor determines if the individual is in need of food, rental and utility assistance, or emotional or behavioral health supports. This same church has provided daily emergency bags of food throughout the pandemic. The Cultural Ambassadors are expanding their reach by adding Young Ambassadors to the initiative.



Summary of Outreach Efforts

- Weekly COVID-19 update meetings with Yale medical staff and Cultural Ambassadors
- Virtual town halls hosted by Yale and the Cultural Ambassadors
- Collaboration with local officials and community leaders to develop health initiatives
- Door-to-door canvassing to disseminate information
- Weekly COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic
- Pop-up COVID-19 testing and vaccine clinics
- Phone calls to coordinate vaccine appointments for community members
- Tom Ficklin media presentations
- Use of Sunday morning services and Bible studies, small group Zoom meetings, email, text messages, social media blasts, postal correspondence, and personal calls to spread message about COVID-19 and the vaccination process
- Ambassadors lead by example by signing up for clinical trials and publicizing images of themselves getting the vaccine
- Distribution of daily emergency bags of food throughout COVID-19
- COVID-19 Crisis Counselor to address needs brought on by the pandemic (sickness, financial instability, mental health)
- Distribution of PPE

Did you know?

Not all diseases are created equal. Minorities have higher rates of certain diseases. It is an unfortunate fact that minorities suffer disproportionately from some diseases. In fact, many diseases affect African Americans more than people from other groups.

African Americans are more likely to die at early ages from all causes.

African Americans

African Americans are twice as likely as non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes. They are also more likely to have kidney disease, to be hospitalized, and to die from diabetes.

African Americans have higher rates of high blood pressure. Men are more likely to die from heart disease.

African Americans are more likely than white adults to have a stroke. Men are 60% more likely to die from it. Survivors are more likely to become disabled and have difficulty with daily activities.

African Americans have higher rates of certain cancers. African Americans are more likely to have stomach cancer. Men have higher rates of lung and prostate cancer. African Americans are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer. Breast cancer is more common in African American women under 45, and they are more likely than other women to die from this disease.

higher rates

The fastest and safest way to determine whether new treatments work for these and other diseases is through clinical research. Yet it's often difficult to find volunteers – *especially minorities* – willing to participate in clinical trials. There is a **shortage of participants in clinical research** – and minority participation is even lower than that of the general population.

Hispanic women are more likely to be diagnosed with HIV infection than non-Hispanic white women. Hispanic men and women are more likely to have AIDS, and are more likely to die from HIV/AIDS.

Hispanic women are more likely to have a stroke than other women.

1 in 10

Hispanic men and women are twice as likely to develop and die from liver cancer than non-Hispanic whites. Hispanic women are more likely to have stomach cancer and cervical cancer than other women. Hispanic men are 1 in 10 times more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer and 1 in 5 times more likely to die from the disease.

30%

Hispanics are twice as likely to die from viral hepatitis as non-Hispanic whites. They are twice as likely to be diagnosed with hepatitis A; and adults 40 years and over are 30% more likely to develop hepatitis B.

twice as likely

Hispanics

Courtesy of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health.

Preparing Young Students of Color to Seize Opportunities in Health Care

by Robert Forman

During the summer of 2021, the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation (YCCI) launched a virtual four-week summer internship program to expose students from age 15 to 20 to careers in clinical and translational medical research. The program is for high school students as well as college undergraduates.

There are 36 interns enrolled in the program, chosen from among 200 students who completed applications and received faculty recommendations. **The students are from 14 different states, Canada, and Puerto Rico. Significantly, 30-40% are minority, approximately 50% are female; and 20% are from rural areas** where similar opportunities are limited. This is the first internship opportunity for many of these students, and there is no charge to participate.

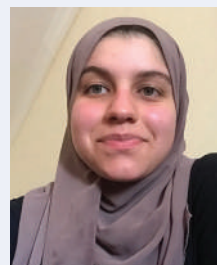
The internship is an opportunity for these young people to be exposed to careers in fields that were never meaningfully suggested to them before. It also is part of a long-term health care priority: to create a health system across the country where patients of color are more frequently treated by health professionals who look like them. There is evidence that greater access to minority caregivers creates a measurable health benefit for patients of color. For instance, as reported in 2020 in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, infant mortality was found to fall among patients of color when their health providers were people of color.

"In order to have more people who look like us, we needed to start earlier in the educational process to invite minorities to the table – to expose them to all the different fields within health care," says Rev. Dr. Leroy O. Perry, Jr., '74 MDiv, pastor of St. Stephens AME Zion Church in Branford, Connecticut, and a Cultural Ambassador to Clinical Research at Yale School of Medicine. "By doing so I think that we can bring better health outcomes for everybody."

YCCI's Cultural Ambassadors Program is a more than decade-long partnership among Yale, the predominantly Black AME Zion Church, and other community leaders. These trusted figures from minority communities are equal partners in the development and implementation of strategies to ensure access and inclusion of historically underrepresented participants in clinical research.

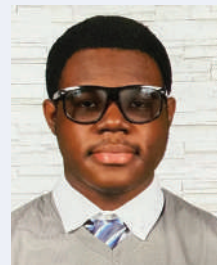
Through their efforts, minority participation in Yale clinical trials has risen from just 3% in 2010 to approximately 31% now.

"It has been a steady effort by Yale and YCCI to make communities of color central to our clinical research. Making the opportunities to participate in clinical research available to everyone and working with our communities to help guide and prioritize our research efforts is not only critical in delivering optimal health care to all, but is also very important to the science of clinical and translational research," says Brian R. Smith, MD, co-director of YCCI, deputy dean



Fatima Ali
2021 YCCI Summer
Exposures Intern

"This internship was an incredible experience as I've never learned so much about our health system and clinical research. The program opened my eyes to the health inequity in America. We talked to so many important leaders in the medical community who were inspired and committed to make changes. If there is anything I learned from these amazing figures it is that there is never a right time to start making changes, the time is always now – if you have a goal work towards it."



Joshua Brown
2021 YCCI Summer
Exposures Intern

"During my internship with YCCI, I was introduced to multiple leaders from many fields. I was able to connect with professionals and learn about the fields of neuroscience and informatics. With this information, we connected data and worked on team projects to explain the different aspects of clinical research as it relates to children and adolescents. This was a great opportunity to gain friendships with like-minded people while teaming up to cause change."



Hansuja Chaurasia
2021 YCCI Summer
Exposures Intern

"My time at the YCCI internship was one of the highlights of the summer. This program had such engaging, informative sessions where I learned so much. I loved meeting various leaders throughout the internship and having lunch with them while asking questions and learning about their lives. Working with my project members was a wonderful experience. As a result of this internship, I met a lot of incredible students just like me; some of whom I still keep in touch with today. Finally, every staff member was extremely kind and treated all the interns, including myself, with such respect and love, which I greatly appreciated."

for clinical and translational research, and professor of laboratory medicine, biomedical engineering, medicine (hematology), and pediatrics. "A health care workforce that reflects the full population is also a priority. Exposing young people to career opportunities in clinical and translational research as early as possible is important work that we are proud to do."

The summer internship, in fact, is the first step in a larger, even more ambitious program, through which students, families, and community leaders will be engaged in an ongoing sustained relationship to both encourage and provide a pathway into careers in science, medicine, and clinical/translational research. Resources will include résumé and college application support, and exposure programs where students will meet with leaders at Yale and partnering organizations.

Exposing young people to career opportunities in clinical and translational research as early as possible is important work that we are proud to do. – Brian R. Smith, MD

Interns will get their first opportunities to meet some of those leaders this summer, through virtual lunches with an expert from the Food and Drug Administration; top clinicians and scientists from Yale School of Medicine and Yale New Haven Health System; and a professor of medicine from Morehouse College, a historically Black college.

The summer internship also includes course work, lectures, journal club, and a group project chosen from among these topics:

- How to explain research to children and adolescents
- Informed consent and adolescent assent considerations
- "Help Us Discover" clinical trials education and awareness campaign for kids, adolescents, and young adults
- Exploring ways to promote education and awareness of Yale's pediatric clinical research through the Epic MyChart patient portal.

YCCI's record of consistent success, through continuing support by the national Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) program, resulted in 2018 in a Memorandum of Understanding with the FDA Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (OMHHE) that formalizes collaboration between Yale and the FDA and builds upon a shared interest in promoting scientific progress through exchange of scientific capital in public health, epidemiology, and research.



Frances Bernier Matta
2021 YCCI Summer
Exposures Intern

"YCCI gave me the opportunity to meet and learn from brilliant professionals in many different fields of medicine. This had such a positive impact on me personally and my future goals. The knowledge I gained serves as a tool for my future path in medicine. Building research projects with my fellow interns helped me broaden my view on what research truly entails."



George Obongo
2021 YCCI Summer
Exposures Intern

"My internship experience at the Yale Center for Clinical Investigation gave me the opportunity to participate in translating clinical research to pediatric patients. I also engaged with research experts and Yale faculty while learning much about clinical research. The opportunity allowed me to collaborate with peers in a group project. I also learned about various career options in the medical and research fields."

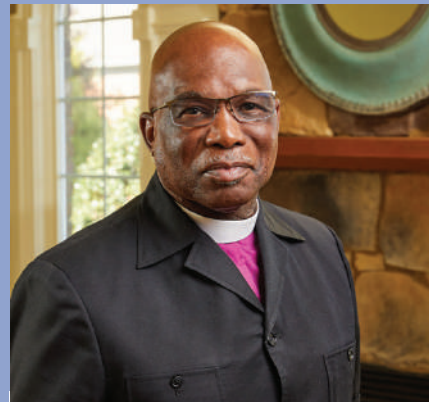


Brandon Kumpf
2021 YCCI Summer
Exposures Intern

"My internship at YCCI was something that I never could have imagined. There were some incredible presenters, from Dr. Paul Taheri to President Marna Borgstrom, that gave insight into their work lives and suggestions on where interns can go next. I also got to contribute to projects that hopefully will become something much bigger, teaching years of students to come about clinical trials. This experience was truly a once in a lifetime opportunity that gave me many connections and skills to help me pursue my career in the future."

Prostate Cancer Survivor Stories

These stories were made possible by the Yale Cultural Ambassadors, who have been actively and passionately dedicated to advancing health equity, health education, diversity in clinical trials, and community engagement for over a decade.



Bishop Kenneth Monroe – Prostate Cancer Survivor Facing uncertainty through faith

It was in the year 2000 when the Rev. Dr. Kenneth Monroe, pastor of the Metropolitan AME Zion Church, Hartford, CT noticed the need for more frequent bathroom breaks. Moreover, he realized that it was important to tell his doctor as soon as possible. He went for a physical and a prostate cancer screening which showed that his PSA count was 12.8. His doctor referred him to an urologist who ordered a prostate biopsy. The tissue was positive for cancer.

As a pastor, it was always important to help others with their faith development as he served congregations across the United States and the Bahama Islands. This time, he knew he would need to help employ the faith he had in himself, the faith he had in the doctors, and the faith he had in God. “I wasn’t afraid, I just thought, I’m going to get rid of this! God has a way of bringing us through,” he said.

“It took a few days for me to tell my wife,” said the bishop. She didn’t process the implications of his sickness until they visited the urologist together and went over the treatment options. Because he acted quickly, Dr. Monroe’s cancer was caught early and surgery could mean complete recovery. For Dr. Monroe, the choice was clear. “I didn’t want the disease in my body. I said, just take it out!” His wife agreed, saying, “I want you alive.” The procedure went well, leaving no visible scars. Following the surgery, he underwent radiation and hormonal treatment for several weeks.

The now Bishop Monroe learned during his treatments that African American men have a greater risk of developing prostate cancer and that they often have more aggressive diseases and are known to experience worse outcomes. So, soon after surgery, he shared his experience with his congregation. “It was so important to convey this message that we need to take care of ourselves as well as each other, and that it is okay to talk about it,” he said.

Bishop Monroe led several meetings with the men in his congregation, advocating for annual physicals and routine prostate cancer screenings, reminding them that many men have no symptoms. He explained the steps and the process, and they discussed questions and concerns as a group. “You don’t want to wait. Do all these things right away so you can catch it early and take care of it,” said the Bishop. “I wanted all the men to embrace the need to be examined.”

Humbled and inspired, Dr. Monroe moved forward with his life, being elected a bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 2004. He has served West Africa (Ghana, Liberia, Togo, Cote d’Ivoire); Missouri, Kentucky, South Carolina, Georgia and now Eastern North Carolina as the Presiding Bishop. After nearly 20 years of being cancer free, Bishop Monroe wrote his memoir in a book entitled, *“Adventures of Uncertainty, Making the Impossible Possible with God”* (2018), which details his challenges, experiences, and triumphs, from the Carolinas to Connecticut, to West Africa and back again, including his journey through prostate cancer and beyond.

“Once I told my story, so many people started to call and come by to talk. When one speaks out, others reach out, sometimes because they want to help, and sometimes because they need help themselves.” Unfortunately, several people are afraid to get tested or they have already been diagnosed with a disease. Time and time again, I have encouraged persons not to be afraid, because I believe they will be able to overcome the challenge. “It is important for men to know... ask questions, take care of your health, and get support.”

“It is important for men to know ... ask questions, take care of your health, and get support.”

– Bishop Kenneth Monroe



Tom Ficklin – Prostate Cancer Survivor Remaining calm in the storm

After a few years of slowly rising prostate specific antigen (PSA) counts, Tom Ficklin heard the words he was hoping he never would: “It’s time for a prostate biopsy.” Although the most important thing to Tom was his health and survival, he still wishes someone had discussed better pain management options with him before he had the biopsy. But when the results came back positive for cancer, his focus shifted to treatment options.

Tom was given a choice between radiation and surgery; he chose external radiation, and the procedure took place very quickly thereafter.

“If I were to do it over again today, I might wait a little while longer for treatment, do some reflecting, get a second opinion, and research whether there were any clinical trials I could join.”

Tom’s PSA had risen from 2.4 to 4.0, but 4.0 does not usually indicate an advanced case of prostate cancer. “The biopsy was important because a PSA test alone cannot tell you whether your tumor is slow growing or advanced,

but if you have a slow growing prostate cancer, you have a little time to consider options and opportunities with your doctors or clinical researchers,” said Tom. “My doctors were proactive and wanted the best for me, but unless it’s an emergency situation, it is OK to pause and ask questions.”

Tom was passionate about health long before his prostate cancer diagnosis. From 1975 through 1978, he was director of health and education for the Urban League. He also authored and edited health articles for local publications. In 2011, a few years after his surgery, he completed a CARES fellowship with the Connecticut Health Foundation. And today, Tom is president of Ficklin Media, established in 2008, and hosts his own radio show, addressing personal and community health and social issues in the black community. “Still, looking back, when a doctor tells you that this is what you need to do, people don’t always feel comfortable with asking about other options. Just do it” he said.

Tom had a long-time relationship and great trust in his primary care doctor, but felt that the specialists worked a little bit faster than he would have liked. “Oncologists and cancer surgeons are so used to just knocking these things out as quickly as they can, sometimes they forget to talk to patients about the impact the treatment will have in terms of physical and psychological side effects,” Tom said. “Find one doctor who can be your rock and get someone to be your health advocate if you find it difficult to ask questions yourself,” he added.

Side effects of prostate cancer treatment can include incontinence and impotence. “Radiation treatment also causes fatigue, but that was less difficult to deal with, relatively speaking,” Tom said. “The impact of side effects on the male ego can be significant, it can be a psychological assault, and there are young men who get this too, and might really struggle. But living is better than dying, and there are low-cost solutions like suction pumps and Viagra that many men find very effective.

Reaching out to friends and family for support, sharing his personal experience, and taking advantage of his hospital’s integrative services – including massage, tai chi, yoga, and one-on-one spiritual exercises – were also important factors in his recovery.

Right after his surgery, it suddenly occurred to Tom that he should reach out to a friend he hadn’t spoken to in 50 years. “Turns out, he had just come through prostate cancer himself, and had had the Davinci procedure. Some might call it a coincidence that I thought of contacting him at that time. I like to think it was something more.”

“Don’t be afraid to do whatever you need to do to keep on living your life”

– Tom Ficklin

To find out about ongoing trials, visit: YaleStudies.org or call 1-877-978-8343



RADM Richardae Araojo
Associate Commissioner for Minority Health and Director of the Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (OMHHE) in the Office of the Commissioner at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

In this role, RADM Araojo provides leadership, oversight, and direction on minority health and health disparity matters for the Agency. The Office of Minority Health and Health Equity aims to promote and protect the health of diverse populations through research and communication of regulatory science that addresses health disparities.

RADM Araojo previously served as the Director of the Office of Medical Policy Initiatives (OMPI) in FDA's Center for Drug Evaluation and Research (CDER), where she managed the OMPI's immediate office and three divisions. She led a variety of broad-based medical and clinical policy initiatives to improve the science and efficiency of clinical trials and enhance professional and patient labeling. RADM Araojo worked collaboratively with other FDA disciplines, program areas, and FDA centers to foster an interdisciplinary approach to policy development and to enhance the integration of the continually evolving science and policy into FDA's drug development and regulatory review processes. She provided oversight and direction for cross-cutting center and Agency working groups, as well as collaborations with external constituents, to advance medical policy development.

RADM Araojo joined FDA in 2003, where she held a number of positions in CDER's Office of New Drugs, first serving in the Division of Psychiatry Drug Products (formerly the Division of Neuropharmacological Drug Products) and then with the Pediatric and Maternal Health Staff (currently the Division of Pediatric and Maternal Health). She then transitioned to the Office of Medical Policy in 2010, where she served as Acting Director of the Division of Medical Policy Programs, Deputy Director of OMPI, and finally Director of OMPI.

RADM Araojo received her Doctor of Pharmacy Degree from Virginia Commonwealth University, completed a Pharmacy Practice Residency with an emphasis in Community Ambulatory Care at the University of Maryland, and later earned a Master's degree in Pharmacy Regulation and Policy from the University of Florida.

Office of Minority Health & Health Equity

FDA's Office of Minority Health and Health Equity (OMHHE) commemorates 10 years of working towards creating a world where health equity is a reality for all. For the past decade, OMHHE has made tremendous progress in raising awareness around chronic diseases, addressing clinical trial diversity, supporting research projects that answer specific minority health concerns, and training a diverse workforce through our various fellowship programs.

The U.S. population is growing increasingly diverse and ensuring meaningful representation of racial and ethnic minorities in clinical trials for regulated medical products is fundamental not only to the FDA's regulatory mission, but also public health. However, racial and ethnic minorities continue to be underrepresented in clinical trials and remain disproportionately burdened by many chronic and debilitating diseases. Because clinical trials provide a crucial base of evidence for evaluating whether a medical product is safe and effective, enrollment in clinical trials should reflect the diversity of the population that is ultimately going to use the product. It is important for clinical trial participants to reflect the diversity of the population that is going to use the product so that sub-population data can be appropriately analyzed, and more meaningful clinical data can be communicated to the public.

The FDA Office of Minority Health and Health Equity and the Yale School of Medicine/Yale Center for Clinical Investigation (YCCI) have partnered to increase participation of diverse and historically underrepresented or underserved populations in clinical research.



Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

<https://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/PartnershipsCollaborations/MemorandaofUnderstandingMOUs/AcademiaMOUs/ucm603678.htm>

This past year's Innovation and Diversity Summit was the second in our planned series as a part of our MOU and focused on the importance of historically underrepresented racial or ethnic minorities in clinical research. Our goal is to bring stakeholders from the governmental agencies, industry, academia, and community to provoke discussion about innovation and clinical trial diversity and raise awareness.

This past year's event was special as we were also celebrating the 10th anniversary and accomplishments of both the FDA Office of Minority Health and Health Equity and the Yale Cultural Ambassadors Program, which is a partnership between Yale, Junta for Progressive Action, and the Connecticut African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Zion Churches to promote clinical research education and diverse participation in clinical trials.

Meet the AME Zion Cultural Ambassadors

Representatives of AME Zion Church, one of the nation's oldest African American denominations, are serving as Cultural Ambassadors to Yale's research programs, advising investigators how best to raise awareness of clinical research. YCCI provides Cultural Ambassadors with intensive training on clinical research topics so that they are able to answer your questions about participating in research. It is our hope that this collaboration will increase the participation of African Americans. Our goal is to bring medical advances to patients who need them.

Reverend Clayton is a co-founder of the Yale Cultural Ambassadors Program, launched more than ten years ago with a mission to catalyze the sustainable advancement of patient diversity, equity, and inclusion in clinical research.

Reverend Clayton is a native of Waterbury Connecticut, where he attended the local schools and graduated from W. F. Kaynor Regional Technical Vocational School. Reverend Clayton worked in the automotive refinishing business for 25 years. He began his pastoral vocation in 1983, after years of a passionate pursuit of music that included playing in church. He matriculated at Slidell and Hartford Seminaries and completed his Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Hartford Hospital. He was the Pastor of Redeemers Church in Plainville for 18 years and is now the Pastor of Walter's Memorial AME Zion Church, Bridgeport, CT.

Reverend Clayton became a Cultural Ambassador so that he could help raise awareness of the importance of clinical trials for his community. The program has taught him the importance of diversity among clinical trial participants to include people of different ethnic backgrounds, as well as women and children. He said that YCCI brochures and pamphlets on clinical research have been helpful in generating discussions about different diseases and have led to talk about cancer, diabetes, and research in general.

“The program has helped to dispel the myths that clinical research means being a guinea pig. It is also helping to inform my community that everyone needs to participate in research.” – Rev. Clayton

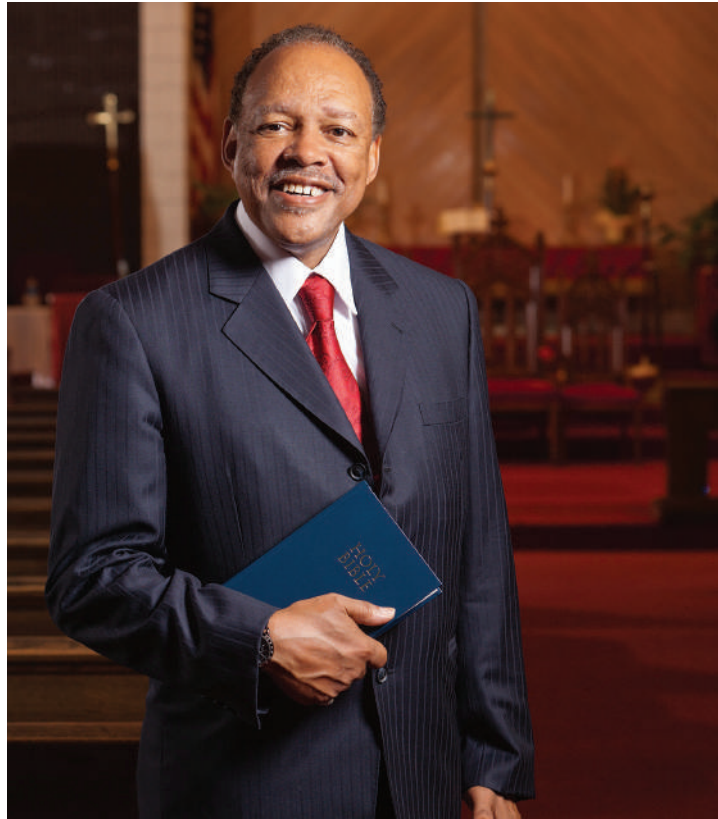


Reverend Elvin Clayton, Walters Memorial AME Zion Church, Bridgeport and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Cultural Ambassador photos by Robert Lisak

continued on next page 20

Meet the AME Zion Cultural Ambassadors *(continued)*



Reverend Dr. Leroy O. Perry, Jr., St. Stephens AME Zion Church, Branford and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Reverend Dr. Leroy O. Perry, Jr. is a co-founder of the Yale Cultural Ambassadors Program, launched more than ten years ago with a mission to catalyze the sustainable advancement of patient diversity, equity, and inclusion in clinical research. The Reverend Dr. Perry is the Pastor of St. Stephens AME Zion Church. He earned his BA from Livingstone College, his MDiv from Yale Divinity, and STM and doctoral degree from New York Theological Seminary in New York City. He served on Mayor O’Leary’s commission for diversity study for the City of Waterbury, and as chairman of the Clergy Support committee for Waterbury Opportunities Industrialization Center, where he worked to foster Black economic development in the area. Presently he serves as the director of the Fatherhood Program at New Opportunities in Waterbury, CT.

Although he was aware of health care disparities before becoming a Cultural Ambassador, he was not aware of the clinical research conducted at Yale. Like many African Americans of his generation, there was a historical stigma dating back to the Tuskegee Study that stymied his interest in clinical research. He was pleased to discover that YCCI wanted to establish a partnership with the community that is built on an informed and clear definition of policies, procedures, and practices regarding clinical research. He is now an Ambassador for YCCI and serves as an advocate within the African American community in particular and the larger minority communities in general. He feels the partnership with Yale is a valuable learning exchange and a necessary adhesive needed to bridge an effective community relationship for the advancement of clinical research.

Reverend Kelsey M. Hopson is a native of Earlington, KY. He received a BA in Business Administration with Management Specialization from Kentucky State University and was conferred the Master of Divinity Degree with Specialization in Wesleyan Studies from St. Paul School of Theology in Leawood, Kansas.

Reverend Hopson served as pastor in Kentucky for 8 years and Kansas City, MO for 7 ½ years before being appointed to the historic Mt. Olive AME Zion Church (the oldest Black institution in Waterbury) in Waterbury, CT in 2018 where he currently serves. Pastor Hopson also serves as the CEO of the Mt. Olive AME Zion Senior Citizens Center Inc.

Reverend Hopson became a Cultural Ambassador in order to learn more about clinical research and to be part of an institution and mission that strives to make a qualitative difference in people’s lives. “Since becoming a Cultural Ambassador, I’ve been amazed by the quality and practicality of the information provided through the training and presentations alone. I believe communities need access to reliable and practical information that empowers people to take up agency for their health and the well-being of others. Partnering with the Yale Clinical Research program provides invaluable opportunities for me to better serve the Senior Center, congregants, community, and beyond.”



Reverend Kelsey M. Hopson, Pastor, Mount Olive AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Reverend Kelcy Steele is a native of Rock Hill, SC and began his college education at York Technical College. He graduated from Belmont Abbey, in Belmont, NC with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion & Psychology. Pastor Steele was awarded a Certificate from Emory University for completing the course From Freedom Rides to Ferguson: Narratives of Nonviolence in the American Civil Rights Movement. He studied an array of theological courses at Shaw University Divinity School, and earned his Masters of Divinity at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, OH. Pastoral assignments for Pastor Steele have included Morning Star Church, Charlotte, NC; New Loves Chapel AME Zion Church, Lake Wylie, SC and Bethel AME Zion Church, Kannapolis, NC.

He is an inductee of the 2015 World Methodist Council Order of The FLAME and a sought-after evangelist, revivalist, and workshop facilitator. Pastor Steele is the author of the book “*The Sound of Revival*” Exploring Prophetic Preaching in the Wesleyan Tradition.

In September 2016, Pastor Steele was appointed by Bishop Dennis V. Proctor to Varick Memorial AME Zion Church, New Haven, CT as the 43rd Pastor. Pastor Steele is presently serving the New Haven Community in the following capacities – CEO of the Varick Center for Empowerment; Imani Breakthrough Project Leader, Founder of the Connecticut Social Justice Collaborative, founding member of the CT Equity Now (CTEN), the Chair of the Board of Directors for Booker T. Washington Academy; an affiliate member of New Haven Rising; the Director of Evangelism for the New England Conference; Dean of the Hartford District Studies; Cultural Ambassador of Yale Center for Clinical Investigation; a Board Member for Bridges of Hope; and was appointed by the Governor Ned Lamont to the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles.



Reverend Kelcy Steele, Pastor, Varick Memorial AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

“Since becoming a Cultural Ambassador, I’ve been amazed by the quality and practicality of the information provided through the training and presentations alone. I believe communities need access to reliable and practical information that empowers people to take up agency for their health and the well-being of others. Partnering with the Yale Clinical Research program provides invaluable opportunities for me to better serve the Senior Center, congregants, community and beyond.” – Rev. Hopson

Meet the AME Zion Cultural Ambassadors *(continued)*



Reverend Moses L. Harvill, Pastor, Cross Street AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Reverend Harvill is a native of Birmingham Alabama, earning his BA from Alabama A&M University, his MBA from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and MDiv from Yale University. He serves in the Northeastern Episcopal District and New England Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Along with being president and founder of H.O.P.E. Inc. (Home Ownership Providing Empowerment) and the chair of the City of Middletown Jones Fund, he is a key organizer of the Ministerial Alliance of Middletown, a coalition of dedicated pastors serving the community. His concern for education propelled him to organize and develop a successful Back-To-School Community Day, providing school supplies and accessories to over 500 children in the Middletown community.

Reverend Harvill has a focused leadership and love for people which trickles down to his congregation and throughout the community through his many deeds of service. He is credited as a Humanitarian recipient of numerous service accommodations and awards.



Reverend Robyn M. Anderson, Pastor, Blackwell AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

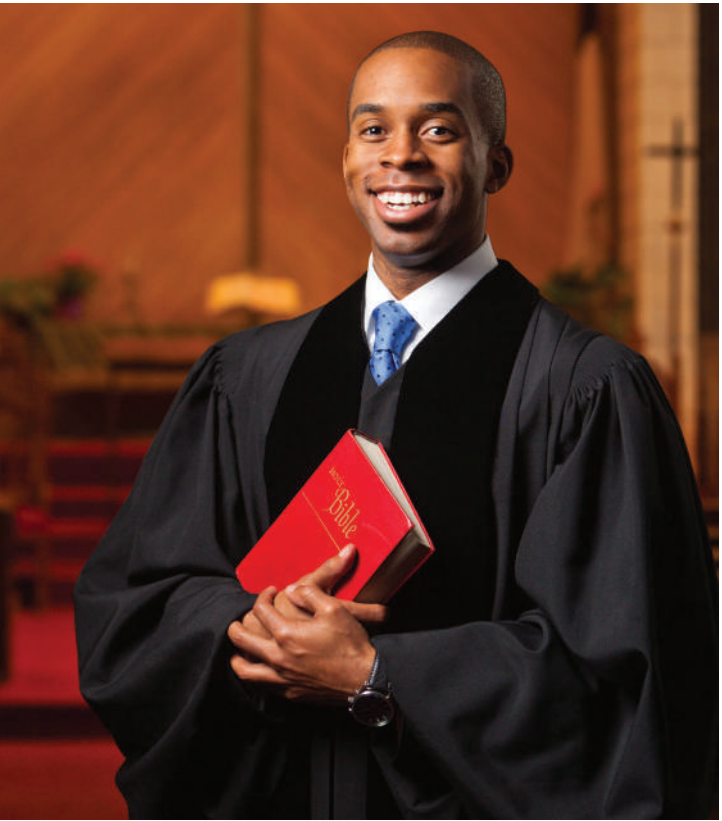
Reverend Anderson is the Director for the Ministers Health Fellowship Advocacy Coalition and the Program Director for the Multidimensional Family Therapy, Training, Consultation, and Quality Assurance Program for Advanced Behavioral Health in the State of Connecticut. She holds an Associates Degree in Information Systems, a BA in Computer Science and Counseling, and a MA in Counseling and is currently pursuing her Master of Divinity with a concentration in Urban Ministry at the Boston Campus of Gordon Conwell Theological Institute.

Robyn Anderson has over 35 years of experience in the Human Services field and over 30 years experience working with adults and adolescents with co-occurring disorders. As an agent of change in the field of human services, Robyn is a strong advocate for HIV/STD education and treatment through cultural competence and innovative, trauma-sensitive, gender-specific, family-driven services for residents throughout the diaspora. She continues to provide Clinical Consultation to state programs, community based substance abuse treatment programs, and the faith based community in the Hartford and Washington, DC area.

Reverend Eldren D. Morrison After graduating high school, Reverend Morrison was appointed to Pastor of the Warner Temple AME Zion Church in Lancaster, SC. During this time he also went on to major in Religion and Philosophy at Livingstone College in Salisbury, NC. Pastor Morrison has served five congregations in the itinerate ministry of the Methodist Church. He has served as Pastor of the Pleasant Hill AME Zion Church in Heath Springs, SC, Metropolitan AME Zion Church in Chester, South Carolina, and the Liberty Hill AME Zion Church in Lake Wylie, SC, where during his pastorate the church grew to be Zion's largest congregation in the state. In 2007 he was appointed to Varick Memorial Church.

In 2009, while pastoring in New Haven, and recognizing the need for more high quality education options in the community, Pastor Morrison established, and remains a board member of the Booker T. Washington Academy, a pre-k through 8th grade charter school serving the growing number of children of Dixwell, Newhallville, and the larger New Haven community. The academy opened its doors in September 2014.

Reverend Morrison is currently a Pastor at Shaw Temple in Smyrna, GA, and chair of Shaw Temple Academy, a daycare and preschool. He continues his work with integrating church education and community development. Reverend Morrison, one of the co-founders of the program, became a Cultural Ambassador because he saw the disconnect between health care services and knowledge about medications and current trials in the larger African American community. During his tenure as a Cultural Ambassador, he has learned about the benefits of clinical research and the protections in place for volunteers. Most importantly, he is now aware of the importance of minority participation in clinical trials in order to understand the effectiveness of treatments in these populations. He represents the spirit of YCCI – *“the connection between the community and the wealth of knowledge, the programs, and the opportunities at Yale.”*



Reverend Eldren D. Morrison, Pastor, Shaw Temple AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program



Joyce Patton, Member, Varick Memorial AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Joyce Patton is a member of Varick Memorial AME Zion Church in New Haven, CT. She is a graduate of Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC, where she received a BA in elementary education and has completed further studies at Winthrop College and Southern CT State University. She is a retired educator from the New Haven Public School System. She serves as the secretary of the Bureau of Overseas Supplies, which provides supplies to disaster-stricken areas and to the homeless, victims of domestic violence, children of prisoners, and people living with HIV and AIDS. She is a member of the Heritage Chorale as well as the Varick Voices of Victory.

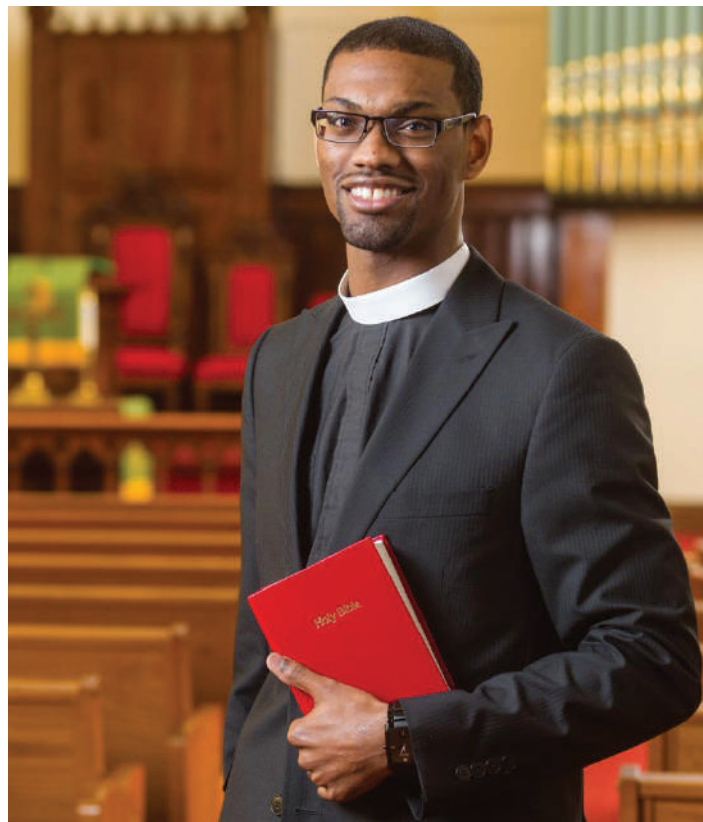
Through her work as a Cultural Ambassador, Ms. Patton has learned about treatment for addiction, heart disease, and cancer and has become aware of how people in underserved communities do not trust clinical trials. Through her work in the church, she has offered support and encouragement to those she comes in contact with to be open to trials that may be helpful to them and their families.

Meet the AME Zion Cultural Ambassadors *(continued)*

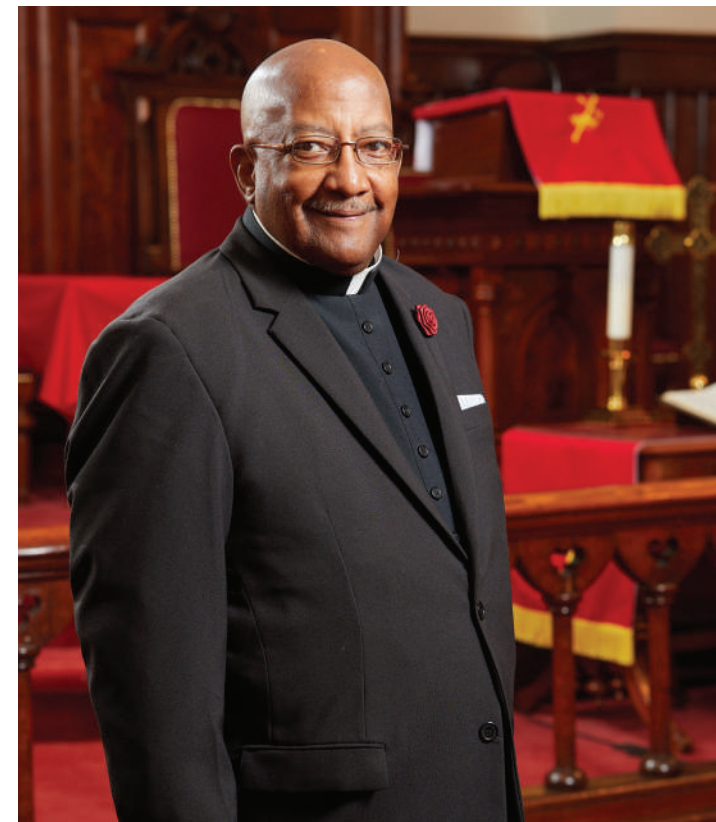
Reverend Derrill Antonio Blue received his undergraduate education in business management from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro, NC and in organization leadership from the University of Memphis. He received his Master of Divinity from Saint Paul School of Theology in Oklahoma City, OK.

Reverend Blue began his pastoral vocation at the age of 23. He has served AME Zion congregations in Erwin, NC; Batesville, MS; Oklahoma City, OK; and Sharon, MS. In June 2014, Reverend Blue was appointed pastor of the Mt. Olive AME Zion Church in Waterbury, CT. On December 17, 2017, Reverend Blue was appointed pastor of the Memorial AME Zion Church in Rochester, NY. He was appointed the Presiding Elder of the Rochester-Syracuse District on July 15, 2018.

Reverend Blue has experience working in the banking industry, and university assessment and accreditation. He is an adjunct professor at Mid-America Christian University in Oklahoma City, OK. He became a Cultural Ambassador because he wanted to be part of an organization that has a mission to make a difference in the community through research. Since joining the program, he has learned firsthand about research that is taking place to assist the minority population with treatment, medicine, funding, and service. He notes that many of the researchers he has met have expressed the desire to better treat and prescribe medicines that will work for the minority population. He feels the program has worked well for people in the community; some are active participants in the clinical trials that are taking place and it has brought awareness to the minority community that health is important and there are programs in place to aid them in taking care of their bodies and minds.



Reverend Derrill Blue, Presiding Elder of the Rochester-Syracuse District Senior Pastor, Memorial AME Zion Church, Rochester, NY and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program



Wilbert L.O. Davis, Pastor, St. Peter's Tabernacle AME Zion Church, Gastonia, NC and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Reverend Wilbert L.O. Davis is the pastor of the St. Peter's Tabernacle AME Zion Church. He is a graduate of Livingstone College where he earned a Bachelor of Theology and received the Master of Divinity degree from Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury, NC.

Reverend Davis has served congregations in North Carolina, South Carolina, New York, and New Jersey. He has worked with many community organizations at each of his pastorate that improved the quality of life of people in the communities. He also shares in his Bible studies classes healthy information, both modern and home remedies, that are beneficial to the health of his congregation and community.

Reverend Davis became a part of the team of Cultural Ambassadors to help bring the awareness and importance of clinical trials in the minority communities that will bring better information and health care for everyone. Without this participation, a vital component of overall health care for everyone will be nonexistent.



Reverend Dr. Sonya Campbell, Associate Minister, Little Rock AME Zion Church, Charlotte, NC and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Reverend Dr. Sonya Campbell serves as Associate Minister, Little Rock AME Zion Church, Charlotte, NC. She earned her BS at Southern Connecticut State University, her Master of Divinity and Doctor of Ministry from The Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, GA.

She has a history of working with underserved communities at Catholic Charities in Waterbury, CT, The Connection in Middletown, CT, and as a volunteer at Safe Haven in Waterbury, CT. Currently the Reverend Dr. Campbell works as a staff chaplain for Atrium Health Hospice of Cabarrus County in Kannapolis, NC.

The Reverend Dr. Campbell had a conversation with a cardiologist who informed her the medication African Americans take is not effective for lowering their blood pressure because African Americans did not participate in clinical trials for the medications on the market. That was the first she heard of the need to be present for research on the medicine and health care we receive.

Although the fear of medicine and doctors resulting from the Tuskegee study still exists, upon hearing about the YCCI and Duke partnerships with the African Methodist Episcopal Zion church Reverend Dr. Campbell was drawn in. She saw this as an opportunity to learn more, and then educate others in her community about the importance of having an active role in health care and clinical trials.

Ray Anderson a retired AT&T manager, became an YCCI Cultural Ambassador In 2018. Born in West Virginia, Ray graduated from Stratford High School, received a BA in Psychology from Southern Connecticut State College, and holds master degrees in both Communications from Fairfield University and Business Administration from Sacred Heart University. His career began as a teacher's aide at Lee High School in New Haven, then as an inaugural staff member of Infoline of SW CT, now the statewide United Way 2-1-1 service offering 24/7 information and referrals to a full range of social services. Ray saw the need for and developed comprehensive statistical reports that focused the United Way's understanding of the human services delivery needs of SW CT residents. He was active on various Boards of Directors and taught a class at Housatonic Community College.

After completing an intern training program at Pitney Bowes, Ray became a computer programmer and then the MIS Manager at Stratmar Fulfillment. Information technology jobs enabled Ray to acquire coding, management, and analytical skills while gaining extensive experience applying them to solve business problems. Ray then joined AT&T holding a range of positions in sales support and operations management. Over his 31 year career, Ray assumed increasingly greater responsibilities being on a team that managed a \$1.5B sales region. He had broad executive-level exposure and worked on key projects with members of the Bell Labs technical staff. Ray also received wide-ranging business, technical, management, sales, and operational training, won numerous performance awards, and attended many regional and national recognition events.



Ray Anderson, Member, St. Stephens AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Meet the AME Zion Cultural Ambassadors *(continued)*



Lillian Reason, Member and Missionary, Varick Memorial AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Lillian Reason is a graduate of Livingstone College, Salisbury, NC. She earned a Masters of Arts in teaching as well as a 6th year certificate in supervision and administration from Sacred Heart University in Bridgeport, CT. Ms. Reason is a retired New Haven teacher and literacy coach and continues to tutor first graders in reading. She is a member of Varick Memorial AME Zion Church, where she serves as a missionary. She is a receptionist at the food pantry on a monthly basis and has held several leadership roles in the church over the past 20 years. She has also worked in Christian education planning and holiday programs, as well planning and presenting workshops.

Ms. Reason serves as the president of the Hartford District Women's Home and Overseas Missionary Society, a group to which Yale faculty members have made presentations, in addition to other local groups. She became a Cultural Ambassador because she wanted to inform the women she serves so that they in turn can help improve the health of their community. Her work with YCCI has helped her gain a better understanding of why people are reluctant to participate in clinical research. She is helping to address this issue by exposing people from across the state to research findings so that they can make informed decisions.



Irene Saunders, Member, Mt. Olive AME Zion Church and Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Irene Saunders is a native of Waterbury, CT. She attended Waterbury public schools. Irene became an RN after graduating with a nursing degree from St. Mary's School of Nursing in 1984. She has taken her nursing career beyond the walls of the hospital and out into her community. Ms. Saunders has been a Cultural Ambassador with the Clinical Research Program at Yale since 2011. She has dedicated herself to this work since being on the front lines of nursing in an inner city hospital made her painfully aware of the disparities in health care. She views the program as a way to bridge some of the gaps in health care. Working with Yale has increased her awareness of many health care issues and made her cognizant of the vast opportunities that Yale offers to her community. Irene is an active member of Mt. Olive AME Zion church, where she serves as the President of the Stewardess Board, Vice President of the Scholarship Committee, also as a Deaconess, Trustee, and Usher.

She has established a rapport with the elderly that attend the Mt. Olive AME Zion church Senior Center and they look forward to her visits, where she provides blood pressure screenings and information for healthy living. Irene has recently retired from her 35-year nursing career at St. Mary's Hospital and has decided to move into community health care work which is her passion. For several years, she has been a teacher and parent volunteer for the Granville Academy of Waterbury, an after school program that encourages Black and Brown students to take an interest in STEM careers. She has also been of assistance in community health fairs as a firm believer in the wellness of all people in all walks of life.

Meet the AME Zion Young Cultural Ambassadors



Jolly Black is a graduate of St. Augustine's University where he earned his Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration & Management. He's currently employed by New Opportunities Inc., where he serves as an Employment Specialist. In this role, Mr. Black helps adults and students transition into the working world by assisting them with finding employment, supporting them as they prepare for interviews, evaluating their work abilities, and building a case report that details how they can ensure future success.

Jolly Black, Member, Mt. Olive AME Zion Church and Young Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program



Tawanna Newton is the Director of Operations at the Varick Memorial AME Zion Church. She earned her Master's from University of Bridgeport in Clinical Mental Health. Ms. Newton is a native of New Haven, CT and has found joy in dedicating her time and energy to ministry, community outreach, and empowerment. Presently, she serves on the Board of Directors for the Newhallville Neighborhood Corporation.

Tawanna Newton, Director of Operations, Varick Memorial AME Zion Church and Young Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program



Harmony Jones Duncan was born in Philadelphia, PA and moved to Middletown, CT at the age of two. She is proud to be an alumna of the Middletown Public School District where she developed her love for business management. Ms. Jones graduated Class of 2019, with her Bachelor's Degree in Business Management. She currently works for the Ministerial Health Fellowship as a Covid-19 Counselor serving Middlesex County in CT.

Harmony Jones Duncan, Member, Cross Street AME Zion Church and Young Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program



Megan Perry is a member of St. Stephens AME Zion Church in Branford, CT. She graduated with a BA in English and a minor in Women and Gender Studies, she then earned her MA in Global Media and International Communications and is currently pursuing an Ed.D in Educational Leadership. Ms. Perry is also a proud member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. She is currently a Regional Resource & Data Specialist at The WorkPlace.

Megan Perry, Member, St. Stephens AME Zion Church and Young Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program



Shai Turner was born and raised in Middletown, CT. He attended Middletown High School where he developed his love for sports. It was through playing flag football with his friends that he was able to stay connected to his community while remaining active. Mr. Turner graduated from American International College with a B.S. in Public Health and currently works as a COVID-19 Crisis Counselor for the Ministerial Health Fellowship Advocacy Coalition for Middlesex County.

Shai Turner, Member, Blackwell Memorial AME Zion Church and Young Cultural Ambassador to the Yale Clinical Research program

Why Should I Participate in Clinical Research?

Minorities Have Higher Rates of Certain Diseases

It is an unfortunate fact that minorities suffer disproportionately from such diseases as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and HIV. The fastest and safest way to determine whether new treatments work for these and other diseases is through clinical research. Yet it's often difficult to find volunteers – especially minorities – willing to participate in clinical trials. There is a shortage of participants in clinical research – and minority participation is even lower than that of the general population.

It's Important to Include ALL Types of People in Clinical Studies

Human beings are very much alike. Only 0.01% of our genes varies from one person to the next. But even with these tiny differences, there are still people with different appearances and different health conditions. Illnesses affect each of us differently – as individuals, as families, as racial and ethnic groups, and as communities. Because of these differences, it's important to study different groups of people in order to understand which treatments work best for them. The best way to know that a particular medicine is right for someone is to test it in similar people.

Many diseases affect African Americans more often than people from other groups. For example:

- African Americans are more likely to have stomach cancer than other groups. Men have higher rates of lung and prostate cancer. Breast cancer is more common in African American women under 45, and they are more likely than other women to die from this disease.
- African Americans are twice as likely as non-Hispanic white adults to be diagnosed with diabetes. They are also more likely to have kidney disease, to be hospitalized, and to die from diabetes.
- Americans have higher rates of high blood pressure. Men are more likely to die from heart disease. Women are more likely to be obese.
- African American infants are almost four times as likely to die from causes related to low birth weight compared to non-Hispanic white infants.
- African Americans are more likely than white adults to have a stroke. Men are 60% more likely to die from it. Survivors are more likely to become disabled and have difficulty with daily activities.

Courtesy of US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health.

Real People Who are Helping Us Discover



Photo: Robert A. Usak

Rev. Dr. Leroy O. Perry, St. Stephens AME Zion Church, Branford; Rev. Elvin Clayton, Walter's Memorial AME Zion Church, Bridgeport; Rev. Kelcy Steele, Varick Memorial Church, New Haven.

Three Ways to Sign Up for Clinical Research

Talk to an Ambassador – Contact your pastor, before or after service to discuss your questions about participating in clinical research at Yale.

Email YCCI – Send an email to helpusdiscover@yale.edu indicating your interest in participating in clinical research.

Make a quick phone call – Call 1-877-978-8343 to inquire about opportunities for participation in clinical research.

Join Our Team Yale New Haven Health

As Connecticut's leading healthcare system, Yale New Haven Health has experienced tremendous growth and currently has exciting job opportunities in many of our departments. We invite you to become part of an exceptional healthcare team.

To search and apply for an opportunity, please visit: <https://jobs.ynhhs.org>

When submitting the application, please select as the referral source "YCCI- Ambassadors" and forward your name and the position you applied for to: jaclyn.davis@yale.edu or sundae.black@yale.edu

Yale New Haven Health is an equal opportunity employer.
ynhhs.org

