

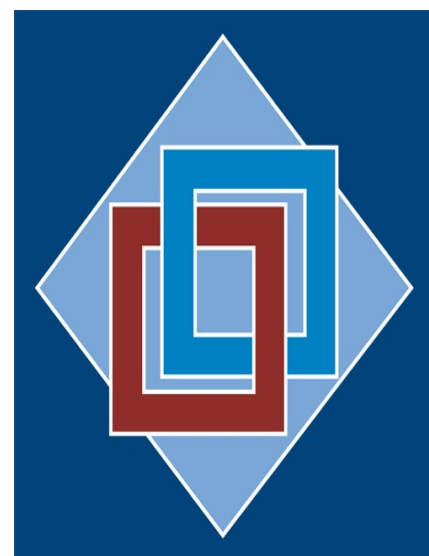
# Central MS Area Health Education Center Perspectives

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Tougaloo College Owens Health and Wellness Center

## Central MS AHEC Partners with the Mississippi State Department of Health to Create a Standardized Certification Program for Community Health Workers

Central MS Area Health Education Center (CMAHEC) is currently working with the Mississippi State Department of Health Office of Prevention and other organizations to develop a standardized program for certifying community health workers (CHW) within the state. This credentialing program will result in the recognition of the CHW profession as a workforce, and as a vital part of the state's health services. CHWs, who are members of the community they serve, conduct outreach and education to citizens in rural and urban areas who suffer from chronic diseases, early childhood diseases, and other health conditions. Community health workers make home visits, help patients navigate complex health information systems, give limited help and advice about improving health conditions, nutrition, medications, and other health resources. This partnership will result in the certification, training, and placement of community health workers who assist in helping to reduce health disparities in Mississippi.



**Fabian Eichelberger, Author**

Mississippi University for Women Graduate Student and Central MS AHEC Intern

### Director's Note



**Sandra C. Hayes, DrPH, MPH, MCS**  
Central MS AHEC Director

Numerous studies have shown the effectiveness of community health workers (CHWs) on improving quality of care and health outcomes. CHWs have contributed to significant improvements in community members' access to and continuity of care, screening and other health-related behaviors, and adherence to treatment for control of various conditions and diseases, as well as reduced health care costs. Adding CHWs to the patient-provider team has a beneficial effect on the quality of care for vulnerable populations. Therefore, the Central Mississippi Area Health Education Center at Tougaloo College is working to implement a program that assists in the identifying, training and placing community health workers in rural communities to provide limited health education and patient navigation to reinforce multi-disciplinary health interventions in an effort to reduce health disparities in Mississippi.

## Breast Cancer Awareness is Always Needed

October was National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Health promotion activities helped women take action regarding their breast health. All women are at risk for breast cancer. However, men can also get breast cancer, but this is rare. Not counting skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common cancer in women of all major racial and ethnic groups in the United States. Although more white women get breast cancer, more black women die from it. Prevention and early detection are key when it comes to breast cancer. You can help lower your risk of getting breast cancer by being physically active and engaging in regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight, and limiting the amount of alcohol consumed. It is also important to discuss the risks of hormone replacement therapy with your healthcare provider to determine if its right for you.



Several factors may affect your risk of developing breast cancer. Some of these factors include — getting older; not having children, or having your first child later in life; starting your first menstrual period at an early age; beginning menopause at a late age; and having a personal history of breast cancer or certain benign breast diseases. Additional risk factors include having close family relatives such as a mother, sister, father, or daughter who have had breast cancer; having been treated with radiation therapy to the breast or chest; and using oral contraceptives.

When breast cancer starts out, it is too small to feel and does not cause signs and symptoms. As it grows, however, breast cancer can cause changes in how the breast looks or feels. Symptoms of breast cancer may include a new lump in the breast; a lump that has changed; a change in the size or shape of the breast; pain in the breast or nipple that does not go away; flaky, red, or swollen skin anywhere on the breast; a nipple that is very tender or that suddenly turns inward; or blood or any other type of fluid coming from the nipple that is not milk when nursing a baby. If you have any of these symptoms, talk to a health care professional. They may be caused by something other than cancer, but the only way to know is to see a health care professional.

Mammograms are the best tests for finding breast cancer early. Mammograms are a series of X-ray pictures of the breast that allow doctors to look for early signs of breast cancer, sometimes up to three years before it can be felt. When breast cancer is found early, treatment is most effective, and many women go on to live long and healthy lives. Most women should have their first mammogram at age 40 and then have another mammogram every two years 74. Talk to your health professional if you have any symptoms or changes in your breast, or if breast cancer runs in your family.

**Ms. Tennille Howard, Author**  
**Jackson State University Doctoral Student**  
**Central MS AHEC Intern**

## Owens Health And Wellness Center Team Conducts Outreach at Bailey Magnet High School Health Fair

On November 2, 2011, Mr. George Patterson, Ms. Fabian Eichelberger, Dr. Sandra Hayes, and Johnnie Hawkins from the Owens Health and Wellness Center visited Bailey Magnet High School to participate in its Health Related Professions Health Fair. Over 400 students attended the event. Activities included information booths, nutrition education and games, blood pressure and cholesterol checks, drug education tips for teens, family and dental health care resources, demonstrations, posters, handouts, give-a-ways, and more.

Central MS AHEC shared information about health professions with 134 students, the majority of which were interested in careers. Community outreach is just one of the many functions of Tougaloo College.

## Youth Health Service Corps Expands

The Central Mississippi Area Health Education Center has expanded its Youth Health Service Corps to 5 high schools within its 10-county target area. The program educates middle and high school students about careers in health professions, how to prepare for those careers, and how they can contribute to the next generation of health professionals in Mississippi.

More than 100 students have enrolled in the program this academic school year. To accommodate its growth, the program is offered to students in the classroom setting or online in webinar format. Participating schools include Williams-Sullivan High School (Durant), Canton High School (Canton), Lanier and Bailey Magnet High Schools (Jackson), and Crystal Springs High School in partnership with Job Corps (Crystal Springs).



## Free Workshops Help Area Residents Improve Health Outcomes

Chronic Diseases Self Management Program — students and residents in the Central Mississippi area can learn to improve their health and manage diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, obesity, and other chronic disease conditions by taking advantage of free workshops. As part of its education and training programs, CMAHEC is launching a free 6-week workshop series focused on *"Chronic Diseases Self Management."*

The program is open to anyone who suffers from chronic disease conditions including college students and community residents. The workshop series is offered once a week beginning November 3—December 15, 2011 at the Tougaloo Owens Health and Wellness Center, Room 202, from 6-7:30 p.m. Enrollment is still open. For more information contact: Johnnie Hawkins at (601) 987-9463.

## Central MS AHEC Attends HOSA Leadership Conference at Ridgeland High School

The Central MS AHEC attended the 2011 Health Occupation Students of America's Leadership Conference on Saturday, November 5, 2011. The event was located at Ridgeland High School and was hosted by Madison Technical Center.

Students attending the conference learned about careers in health professions and how to prepare for those careers. Four high schools in the Jackson Metropolitan Area were represented. Ms. Emily Newman, a representative from the Delta MS AHEC also attended the event.



### Our Staff and Contributing Writers:



**Johnnie M. Hawkins**  
Program Coordinator



**Fabian Eichelberger**  
Graduate Intern



**Tennille Howard**  
Doctoral Intern

### Tougaloo College

The mission of the Central MS AHEC Program is to address the state's health and health workforce needs by developing and implementing educational programs in partnership with academic institutions, health care agencies, and other organizations committed to improving the health of the people of Mississippi. CMAHEC is hosted by Tougaloo College and is an affiliate of the Mississippi Area Health Education Center Program (MS AHEC) at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The MS AHEC Program is partially funded by a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



350 W. Woodrow Wilson , Suite 3320  
Jackson, Mississippi 39213

Phone: 601-987-9463

Fax: 601-987-8732

Email: [shayes@tougaloo.edu](mailto:shayes@tougaloo.edu)

Website: [www.tougaloo.edu/ahec](http://www.tougaloo.edu/ahec)