

Madison Board of Older Adult Advisors community research agenda

from the August and October 2024 meetings

Historic and ongoing systemic discrimination leads to health disparities for people of color and others targeted by unjust policies and practices. Health issues that people experience today may have been caused or worsened by unfair limitations on their access to healthcare, information, transportation, and other resources. The Madison Board of Older Adult Advisors (BOAA) encourages researchers to address the health impacts of systemic discrimination. BOAA members want to work with researchers to improve the health of future generations.

TOP PRIORITIES

#1. Improving communication in healthcare

- Problem: Poor communication and assumptions by the healthcare team, along with older adults not knowing how to communicate with providers, lead to low-quality care
- Research areas and questions:
 - How can healthcare organizations do a better job of assessing and meeting the needs of each patient?
 - How can healthcare providers be trained to better ask questions and listen, to understand people's health issues and what may be causing them?
 - How can healthcare providers be encouraged to talk to the person who's the patient, not just the family member accompanying them?
 - How can we encourage healthcare providers to communicate and act with empathy?
 - How can people be prepared to track and describe their health problems to healthcare providers?
 - How can we help people determine which problems to tell providers about?
 - How can people be encouraged to share what previously helped them with healthcare providers?
 - How can people be supported to advocate for themselves in healthcare settings?
 - How can people learn what to expect with aging?
 - How can we make health information and research opportunities more accessible to community members, including people who do not speak English?

#2. Reducing disparities in healthcare

- Problem: Due to systemic discrimination, older people of color and others targeted by unjust policies and practices have more trouble accessing care and receive poorer quality healthcare

- Research areas and questions:
 - What role do race, education, income, residence, access to transportation, and previous negative experiences with the healthcare system play in determining access to quality care?
 - How can we support the health of people who delay seeking care or have trouble accessing the healthcare system?
 - How can we make medications more affordable, so cost isn't a barrier?

#3. Supporting family and friend caregivers

- Problem: Healthcare providers often don't engage or educate family and friend caregivers of older adults
- Research areas and questions:
 - How can we encourage healthcare providers to share information and coordinate with family caregivers?
 - How can we better connect family caregivers with relevant resources?
 - Does involving family caregivers improve the health of the person they're helping?

#4 (tie). Reducing disparities in Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD)

- Problem: Systemic discrimination contributes to higher rates of ADRD in communities of color and among other groups targeted by unjust policies and practices
- Research areas and questions:
 - How do the rates of ADRD compare across different racial and ethnic groups?
 - What factors drive disparities in ADRD rates?
 - How do stress, poverty, living in under-resourced neighborhoods, not exercising, homelessness, limited access to care, and food deserts impact ADRD rates?
 - How does someone's background, including where they grew up, what they ate, and their education, affect their risk of developing ADRD?
 - What is the role of genetics or family history in ADRD risk?
 - How can we increase access to information about ADRD in communities of color?
 - Why is the age-adjusted death rate for Alzheimer's disease higher in Dane County than in Wisconsin or the U.S. overall?

#4 (tie). Supporting quality sleep and rest

- Problem: There are many barriers to older adults getting enough sleep and rest
- Research areas and questions:
 - How do noisy environments impact sleep, rest, and health?
 - How do work shifts impact sleep, rest, and health?
 - What can healthcare providers do to help people get quality sleep and rest?

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST

Improving nutrition

- Problem: Cost and other barriers to eating well can cause or worsen health problems
- Research areas and questions:
 - Does eating processed food affect your health?
 - Does eating organic food, vegetables, or grass-fed meat improve your health?
 - How can we lower the cost of eating healthy foods?
 - How can we adapt traditional recipes to be healthier?

Increasing physical activity

- Problem: It is difficult for Black older adults, people in big cities, and people with fewer resources to be physically active
- Research areas and questions:
 - How can people get enough exercise, even if they live in less safe areas or can't afford health club memberships?