



The Minority Health and Health Disparities Research Center (hereafter referred to as MHHDR or Center) is an Exploratory Center of Excellence funded by the National Institutes of Health. The Center is a collaborative initiative between Dillard University and the Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center (LSUHSC) whose mission is to improve the health of underserved populations in New Orleans and surrounding regions through the combined strengths of two institutions that have traditionally served minority populations. The Center is housed at Dillard University. It will address a widespread and persistent problem: Low participation in clinical trials furthers health disparities. Dillard University, a historically black college, has an international reputation for preparing minorities for careers in health sciences. Through its nine public hospitals, clinics, and Minority-Based Community Clinical Oncology Program, LSUHSC provides healthcare for more minorities than any other facility in the state.

The MHHDR is built on the framework provided through the NIH translational research paradigm (Figure 1). The NIH Roadmap is a historical cross-institutional initiative that represents a broadened, team approach to science. This initiative emphasizes translational research, which moves scientific discovery from “bench to bedside.” The MHHDR will address two problems: 1) a disproportionate number of minorities pursuing health disparities research, and 2) a shortage of minority clinical research associates (CRAs) to promote and conduct clinical trials within health disparity communities. The Center's goals are to conduct health disparities research, develop minority faculty to become successful investigators, expose undergraduates to health disparity research, and train minority CRAs. The overarching goal is to develop evidenced-based methodologies for increasing minority participation in clinical trials. Goals will be realized through integrated research, training, and community engagement. These

will be incorporated into clinical and translational research projects that focus on chronic conditions accounting for a disproportionate share of disease among health disparity populations.

The research component pairs new investigators with established ones. Training focuses on educating undergraduate students in health disparities research and outreach, and on training nurses to conduct clinical trials and promote the inclusion of underrepresented minorities. Community engagement would reduce health disparities by increasing the participation of minority and underserved populations.

Relevance

The lack of well-trained biomedical investigators and research nurses decreases minority participation in clinical and basic research, denying them access to advanced healthcare and perpetuating health disparities. The Center promotes the participation of minority investigators, nurses, undergraduate students, and communities in health-related research that affects their community. Thus, the major components of the Center are health disparities research, student and clinical trials training, and community outreach.