

## SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND RELATED DEMENTIAS: RACIAL AND REGIONAL VARIATIONS

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To examine whether racial and regional social determinants of health disparities exist for older adults with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD). We identified 115,879 African American (AA) and White older adults with ADRD (10% from the Deep South) from administrative claims data for a 5% random sample of Medicare beneficiaries (2013-2015). We examined racial and regional differences across sociodemographic characteristics, county-level linked poverty indicators, medical resource availability categories, insurances quality indicators. Social context differences were found between regions including Deep South older adults with ADRD having higher economic impoverishment and lower access rates to specialty medical care services. Older Deep South AA had higher Medicare/Medicaid eligibility rates and less medical access. Significant socioeconomic disparities exist between Deep South and other US regions across several social determinant factors in older adults with ADRD. Social context differences were especially prominent for older Deep South AA with ADRD.

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRIOR CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND ALL-CAUSE DEMENTIA PROGRESSION AMONG U.S. ADULTS

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Cancer-related cognitive impairment is a common effect of cancer that shares symptoms with dementia. Only one study examined cancer's longitudinal association with dementia. This analysis expands to a larger clinical sample. Electronic health record data were extracted from July 2003-February 2020. Baseline cognition/progression on the Alabama Brief Cognitive Screener (ABCs) by cancer history were assessed using linear mixed effects models, with interaction by race. After adjustment for demographics/socioeconomics, those with cancer history had higher baseline cognition ( $\beta$ : 1.49 [0.91-2.07]), and declined slower ( $\beta$ : 0.40 [0.08-0.71]) than those without. Health behaviors/comorbidities attenuated this association. Non-Hispanic Blacks with cancer history demonstrated lower cognition throughout follow-up compared to non-Hispanic Whites / other race/ethnicities with cancer history and participants without cancer history. Health behaviors/comorbidities confound and race modifies the relationship between cancer and dementia. Exploring the role of health behaviors/comorbidities on this association and causes of racial disparities is needed.

## Session 1385 (Symposium)

### EMERGING SCHOLARS AND JUNIOR FACULTY PRESENT NEW STRATEGIES FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN GERONTOLOGY

Chair: Sarah Hahn

Discussant: Jennifer Kinney

With the rapid aging of the population, the need for gerontological educators to identify pedagogical strategies to increase interest and prepare students continues to grow. Innovative approaches and educational practices contribute greatly to student success in the gerontological classroom. Literature on gerontological pedagogy has shed light on the success of high-impact practices, creative assignments, pedagogical interventions, and even different course modalities when it comes to effectively delivering gerontological content and engaging students. Additionally, the Academy for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) provides a wealth of suggestions for creating and implementing effective gerontology courses and assignments. However, while we are familiar with these practices, we are not familiar with how specific groups of academics, such as emerging scholars and junior faculty, are utilizing them. Emerging scholars and junior faculty experience several major transitions as they prepare for life in academia. To ensure that emerging scholars and junior faculty are well prepared, we need to continue to empower these individuals to foster growth. This can be done by highlighting how emerging scholars and junior faculty have met the goals of maximizing and optimizing student learning. As such, the purpose of this symposium is to examine innovative approaches used by emerging scholars and junior academics in the gerontological classroom that have optimized student learning. This includes presentations on strategies for team-based learning, using intersectionality as a theoretical lens, and two creative written assignments, The Gerontological Movie Database Review and Interview an Elder.

### INTERVIEWING AN ELDER: STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CHANGE IN AN INTRODUCTION TO GERONTOLOGY CLASSROOM

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Within the gerontological classroom, high-impact practices and creative assignments have consistently shown to help engage students, optimize learning, and increase positive attitudes toward older adults and aging (e.g., Chonody, 2015; Yamashita, et al., 2018). One such creative assignment, interviewing an older adult, has been cited as both an influential and valuable experience to gerontology students (e.g., O'Hanlon & Brookover, 2002). Although this assignment has been popular in and out of gerontology courses, more data regarding this and student's understanding is needed. As such, this presentation aims to 1) introduce and establish the value of using the written assignment, "Interview an Elder" in the gerontology classroom and 2) present preliminary qualitative data on how students' perceptions of older adults changed after the assignment. Using thematic analysis, results suggest that students are not only surprised by what they learned, but have increased positive perceptions of older adults overall.