

SESSION 3130 (SYMPOSIUM)

KENT AND KLEEMEIER AWARD LECTURES

Chair: Andrzej Bartke, *Southern Illinois University School of Medicine, Springfield, Illinois, United States*

The Donald P. Kent Award is given annually to a member of the The Gerontological Society of America who best exemplifies the highest standards of professional leadership in gerontology through teaching, service, and interpretation of gerontology to the larger society. The Kent lecture will feature an address by the 2018 recipient, Lewis Lipsitz, MD, Hebrew Senior Life. The Robert W. Kleemeier Award is given annually to a member of The Gerontological Society of America in recognition for outstanding research in the field of gerontology. The Kleemeier lecture will feature an address by the 2018 recipient, Keith Whitfield, PhD, Wayne State University.

THE VIRTUE OF A LIFE OF COMPLEXITY: THE KEY TO HEALTHY AGING

Lewis Lipsitz¹, *1. Hebrew SeniorLife, Roslindale, Massachusetts, United States*

People often wish to simplify their lives as they age, hoping to lead a less complex, stress-free, and happy existence. However, the loss of complexity may actually endanger one's health. Aging is often associated with the pruning of work, family, and social networks in our external environment, and on a smaller scale, with the degradation of various anatomic structures and physiologic processes internally. This loss of complexity can impair our ability to perform activities of daily life or adapt to surgery or other stressors. We can quantify complexity using measures derived from the concept of fractals that describe patterns of behavior across different scales in space or time. Using these metrics we have shown that complexity loss is potentially reversible. This presentation will describe the measures, mechanisms, and consequences of complexity loss in different human systems, and interventions that can restore complexity and thereby improve functional health in older age.

HOW NETWORKS POWERED MY CAREER STUDYING AGING IN AFRICAN AMERICANS

Keith E. Whitfield¹, *1. Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, United States*

This presentation will provide some insights about aging in African Americans I have drawn from the network of scholars in my 30 year journey studying aging in African Americans. This journey has been focused on understanding biobehavioral interplays among demographic, genetic, familial, and psychosocial factors to understand individual variability in health and cognitive aging in African Americans. The presentation will include insights my mentors imparted to me, the contributions of my peers and what I learned from and tried to teach to my mentees. I will also share how my contributions were fueled by funding of my research and interactions with the staff at NIA. I will use data from my Carolina African American Twin Study of Aging, the Baltimore Study of Black Aging and the Study of Longevity and Stress in African Americans to provide examples. I will conclude with some suggestions for the next generation of scholars.

SESSION 3135 (SYMPOSIUM)

POLICY SERIES: ADDRESSING LONELINESS AMONG OLDER ADULTS THROUGH RESEARCH, COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, AND A NEW FEDERAL POLICY AGENDA

Chair: Erica Solway, *Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States*

Discussant: Brian W. Lindberg, *The Gerontological Society of America, Washington, District of Columbia, United States*

Millions of older adults experience feelings of loneliness. A growing body of research has found that chronic loneliness can impact memory, physical well-being, mental health, and life expectancy rivaling the impact on health outcomes of obesity and smoking. Loneliness has been found to impact memory, physical well-being, mental health, and life expectancy. In this session, GSA policy advisor Brian Lindberg will lead a data-driven discussion about who experiences loneliness and isolation and how we might create opportunities for connectedness through new areas of research, forward-thinking policies, and innovative community programs. Presenters include Erica Solway, associate director for the National Poll on Healthy Aging, who will highlight results from a poll conducted in October 2018 among a nationally representative sample of adults age 50 to 80 which found that more than one in three respondents felt a lack of companionships and more than one in four felt socially isolated. Then Catherine Spensley, Director of the Senior Division at Felton Institute, will describe lessons learned in developing and delivering culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and services that foster community and social connections among socially isolated, low income older adults in San Francisco. Finally, Andrew MacPherson, Principal at Healthspiren, LLC, and Director of the Coalition to End Social Isolation & Loneliness will describe stakeholder efforts to advocate for federal legislative and regulatory policy options to address the epidemic including increased funding for and access to supportive services, health care, technology, and public and private research initiatives.

LONELINESS AND HEALTH AMONG OLDER ADULTS: RESULTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN NATIONAL POLL ON HEALTHY AGING

Erica Solway,¹ John Piette,² Matthias Kirch,² Dianne Singer,² Jeffrey Kullgren,² and Preeti Malani,²
1. Institute for Healthcare Policy and Innovation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States,
2. University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, United States

In October 2018, the University of Michigan National Poll on Healthy Aging conducted an online survey using a nationally representative household sample of adults age 50 to 80. One in three respondents (34%) reported feeling a lack of companionship and 27% reported feeling isolated from others some of the time or often during the past year. Those with fair or poor self-reported physical health, mental health, or hearing were more likely to report feeling a lack of companionship or feel isolated as were those who reported less frequently engaging in healthy behaviors. More than one in four (28%)