

Project HEAL

Health through Early Awareness and Learning



Health Ministry Guide

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Dear Faith Community Leader,

God is such a loving God that He gave His only son so that you and I might have life. It is to Him that we give our thanks and praise. But with His gift comes a responsibility. We have a responsibility to care for our bodies in the best way that we can.

A healthy congregation means having a healthful balance of body, mind, and spirit.

African American communities are among the most affected by health conditions like cancer. Rates of breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer are higher among African Americans than others.

Project HEAL (*Health through Early Awareness and Learning*) aims to help congregations get the word out about finding cancer early. Project HEAL works with churches and health ministries to educate, empower, and connect people with resources they need to get screened.

I encourage you to join Project HEAL. Consider how it could benefit members of your congregation and save lives.

Cheryl L. Holt, PhD

Professor

Co-Director, Center for Health Behavior Research

Principal Investigator

Visit our website at <http://bit.ly/CHAMPLab>

Our community partners: Community Ministry of Prince George's County &
Access to Wholistic and Productive Living, Inc.

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Introduction

Purpose

The *Health through Early Awareness and Learning* (HEAL) Project was designed to work with churches and health ministries to get the word out about finding cancer early. Project HEAL works with churches and health ministries to educate, empower, and connect people with resources they need to get screened. We focus on breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer, three of the main causes of cancer death in African Americans. We encourage people to follow recommended screening guidelines for getting checked.



How Project HEAL Works

- Project HEAL provides training materials so that leaders in the churches (Community Health Advisors) learn to teach cancer education workshops to their members.
- We train Community Health Advisors (CHAs) to become certified to teach the workshops to the church membership, using a group session format.
- CHAs use scripture and religious/spiritual themes to teach the health message.
- We provide Project HEAL handouts and resources for use in the project.

This guide serves as an overview of how Project HEAL works and what you need to start Project HEAL in your church.

*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health,
just as your soul prospers.*

- III John 1:2 [NKJV]

Benefits of Project HEAL

- Training for church leadership in health ministry development
- Health ministry training manuals
- A 3-part health and wellness series at the church
- Educational materials on health and breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer
- Reports on project outcomes and impact
- Financial incentives for the church, the health ministry leaders, and eligible program attendees





“But showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”

Exodus 20:6 [NIV]

History of Project HEAL

Project HEAL began as a series of three cancer early detection projects described on this page. The materials were created and tested by researchers in preventive medicine through faith-based partnerships and were carried out in 26 African American churches. Community Health Advisors were a vital part of the projects' success, and faith is integrated into all components. These programs were found to be effective in educating church members about cancer and increasing screening rates.

“As You Go, Spread the Word – African American Women and Breast Health”

The breast cancer screening segment developed an educational booklet on breast cancer screening for African American women. After completing the program, women had increased knowledge about mammography and breast cancer. The program was funded by a two year grant from the National Cancer Institute.

“Take Charge of Your Health – A Spiritual Guide to Colorectal Cancer and Screening”

The colorectal cancer segment trained Community Health Advisors to teach their peers about colorectal cancer screening using spiritually-based messages. This resulted in increases in knowledge and screening rates among participating churches. The four year project was funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“A Brother-to-Brother Guide about Prostate Cancer and Screening”

The prostate cancer segment trained Community Health Advisors to teach their peers about informed decision making about screening. Men who completed the program had increased knowledge about prostate cancer and informed decision making. The project was funded through a one year grant from a Comprehensive Cancer Center through the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society.

Take Charge of Your Health with Project HEAL

It is through our bodies that we serve God and show our love for others. We can glorify God and be at our best to serve Him if we are strong and healthy. This means taking care of ourselves and getting the checkups we need. We need to do our part to make sure we live a long, healthy life.

When was the last time you went to the doctor to get a check-up even when you felt fine?

You hear people telling stories all the time about how somebody they knew was going along living fine until one day they went to the doctor and found out they had cancer. Shortly after, that person they knew died. It was not the knowing that killed them — ***it was not knowing.***

But how many times have you heard about someone finding out they had

cancer early, had it taken out, and are now living a long, healthy life? If more people would go in and get tested, they would lower their chances of dying from cancer.

God has given you a choice. You can choose to take charge of your health!

God has given you a choice. You can choose to take charge of your health!

In Project HEAL, Community Health Advisors in your church will learn about the basics of breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer. They will

also learn about the importance of screening (testing) and information to help get them screened.

We are going to teach you the basics, so that prayerfully, you can and will spread the word as you go about your day “loving your neighbor as yourself.” This guide covers the basics of the program.

What is Cancer?

Cancer occurs when cells in a part of the body begin to grow out of control. Normal cells divide and grow in an orderly fashion, but cancer cells do not. They keep on growing and crowd out normal cells.



What is Breast Cancer?

Breast cancer begins when cells in the breast begin to grow out of control. Both men and women can get breast cancer, but it occurs in women much more often than men. Every year, about 230,000 women and 2,500 men in the United States are told they have breast cancer.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the United States. There are some risk factors that increase a woman's risk for getting breast cancer. These include: being over 55 years old, having a history of breast cancer in your family, and certain lifestyle factors.

Treatment is more successful the earlier breast cancer is found. According to the American Cancer Society, women should talk to their doctor about annual

screenings (mammographies) between the ages of 40 and 44. Once a woman turns 45, she should undergo annual mammographies until age 54. Women over the age of 55 should transition to getting screened every other year. In Project HEAL, women will learn about breast cancer and what they can do to stay healthy.

Every year, about 230,000 women and 2,500 men in the United States are told they have breast cancer.

What is Prostate Cancer?



Prostate cancer begins when the cells in the prostate begin to grow out of control. The prostate is part of the male reproductive system. Every year, more than 160,000 men in the United States are told they have prostate cancer. The earlier prostate cancer is detected, the more treatable it will be.

African American men have a much higher risk of getting prostate cancer than other men.

Other risks for getting prostate cancer include having a history of prostate cancer in your family and age.

There are two main screening tests for prostate cancer. These two tests are the digital rectal exam and the prostate specific antigen test. For African American men, a conversation with your doctor about testing for prostate cancer should begin at age 45. Some medical experts are unsure if the benefits of getting tested outweigh the side effects of treatment. In Project HEAL, men will learn about prostate cancer and how to talk to their doctor about informed decision making for screening.

African American men have a much higher risk of getting prostate cancer than other men.

Colorectal cancer is the 3rd most common cancer in the United States for both men & women.

What is Colorectal Cancer?



Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon or the rectum. The colon and the rectum are parts of the digestive system. The cancer occurs in the cells that line the colon or rectum and can lead to growths called polyps. Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in the United States for African American men and women. It mostly affects men and women age 45 and older. Every year, more than 135,000 men and women in the United States are told they have colorectal cancer. Risk factors for colorectal cancer include: a family history of colorectal cancer, age, and certain lifestyle factors.

Colorectal cancer can be prevented with early detection. Testing for colorectal cancer should begin at age 45 for African Americans. If polyps are found before cancer begins to form, they can be removed. There are different types of testing, and how often you get tested depends on the type of test you choose to have. In Project HEAL, men and women will learn about colorectal cancer and how they can prevent it.

Customizing Project HEAL for Your Church

Every church is different and has unique needs. Project HEAL can be customized to fit your congregation. The following tips can help you integrate the program into your church.

If your church already has a health ministry, Project HEAL can be easily incorporated into the ministry. A planning team can help successfully bring the program into your existing health ministry.

If your church does not have a health ministry, a planning team can help your church determine how Project HEAL can be incorporated into your church.

The Planning Team

Depending on the size of your congregation, the planning team should have five to seven members. The team is responsible for deciding how Project HEAL can be included in your church's activities.

The planning team should include:

- Church leaders
- Members of ministries
- Health professionals, including doctors and nurses

For a successful planning team, there are several things you should consider:

- Use the Project HEAL materials and resources as a guide for how the program can fit into your church.
- Schedule planning team meetings well in advance.
- Have an agenda made for every meeting. This will help the team make sure all goals for the meeting are met.
- Keep in contact with all members of the team throughout the planning period.
- Create small sub-teams to divide tasks if it will help meet goals.
- Encourage your team to “think outside the box” and get creative.

- Have patience throughout the entire process. It will take time to complete the planning and bring Project HEAL into your church, but it will be worth it.

Once your planning team has decided how to bring Project HEAL into your church, there is a timeline that will help to make sure the program is as successful as possible.

Community Health Advisors

Volunteers, such as those used in the Community Health Advisor (CHA) model, have been used worldwide to promote health. This model for community health promotion is based on the theory of empowerment and the belief that every community has people to whom others turn to naturally for advice. Your CHAs may be people in the church's health ministry or other willing volunteers in the congregation.

In choosing your Community Health Advisors, the most successful CHAs are those who:

- Are naturally willing to help,
- Others often go to for help or advice,
- Seek improvement of individual and community health, and
- Bridge the gap between health services and your church.

In Project HEAL, CHAs are not meant to take the place of a healthcare professional. CHAs are empowered to use the program materials to:

- Learn about breast, prostate, and colorectal cancer and early detection,
- Provide a series of 3 group workshops and talk to church members about cancer awareness and early detection, and
- Encourage their church community to talk to a health provider about screening.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.

- I Corinthians 6:19 [NIV]

Church Timeline

Below is a general timeline to help guide your church's Project HEAL activities. Each church will be different, so find what works best for you and your congregation.

1. Read through this Health Ministry Guide.
2. Begin identifying CHAs in your church.
3. Recruit 2 CHAs (one woman to lead the breast cancer discussion and one man to lead the prostate cancer discussion).
4. Schedule a date with the University of Maryland team for CHAs to complete training.
5. Have CHAs complete the training and certification process.
6. Work with CHAs to schedule workshops:
 - 1) Enrollment/Overview of Cancer,
 - 2) Breast Cancer & Prostate Cancer, &
 - 3) Colorectal Cancer.
7. Advertise Project HEAL activities and events in church calendar.
8. Begin participant recruitment.
9. Hold CHA-led workshops:
 - 1) Enrollment/Overview of Cancer,
 - 2) Breast Cancer & Prostate Cancer, &
 - 3) Colorectal Cancer.
10. Continue encouraging participants to share the message of early awareness and seek out screening from their doctors.
11. Continue to promote healthy living within your congregation through different activities.

How to Keep Project HEAL Going in Your Church

There are many activities that can promote healthy living within your congregation:

- Include future health topics under a health ministry. These might help promote healthy living such as nutrition and physical activity.
- Include Project HEAL activities in your newsletter.
- Continue health education activities in your church.
- Promote healthy living activities in your church. Include healthy nutrition options such as fresh fruits and vegetables during events. Start light exercise activities such as a prayer walking group.
- Include scripture to encourage your congregation to make healthier choices and live healthier lives.

Project HEAL can be the starting point for a health ministry if your church does not already have one. If there is already a health ministry, it can become a part of it. We invite you to participate in Project HEAL and allow your congregation to take charge of their health.



Acknowledgements

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Investigative Team

Principal Investigator – Cheryl L. Holt, PhD
Program Manager – Sherie Lou Z. Santos, MPH, MCHES
Janice Bowie, PhD, MPH
Jonathan Everett
Laundette Jones, PhD
Daniel Mullins, PhD
Rev. Bettye Leggette Muwwakkil, PhD
BJ Robinson-Shaneman, MSN
Elizabeth Rosenberg, MSW, CHES
Rev. Alma Savoy
Jimmie L. Slade, MA
Marilyn Miles Thomas, M.Ed.
Ebony Toussaint, MPH, CPH
Ralph Williams
Randi Williams, MPH
Nathaniel Woodard
Jing Zhang, PhD

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University of Maryland
1234 School of Public Health
Department of Behavioral and Community Health
CHAMP Lab
College Park, MD 20742

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