



**chicago  
chronic condition  
equity network**

**Annual  
Report**  
2022-2023

# Letter from C3EN Directors

The **Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network** began as a partnership among the University of Chicago, Rush University, and community-based organizations to find real world solutions to health disparities. We're thrilled to share some developments from our first 18 months with you in our first Annual Report.

In 2022, we launched our initial **research programs, Keep It Movin' (KIM)**, to increase physical activity in the African American community across the Alive Faith Network, **Virtual Diabetes Group Visits Across Health Systems (VIDA)**, to facilitate diabetes education and social support through virtual group appointments, and **EngAGE: Voice-Activated Technology to Improve Mobility & Reduce Health Disparities**, to increase physical activity among homebound African American elders.

To nurture early-career researchers, C3EN **Pilot Awards** provide funding to support collection of preliminary data in advance of an NIH-funded health disparities research project, and C3EN **Minigrants** support health disparities research that strengthens community partnerships. As of August 2023, C3EN has awarded 18 Pilot Awards and 4 Minigrants to outstanding early-career researchers—we look forward to sharing their findings.

To foster dialogue among researchers and community members, C3EN cohosted a series of **Town Halls** with community-based organizations in south and west side neighborhoods to identify priorities that will direct C3EN's research. Because mental health was frequently mentioned, C3EN investigators and community partners have submitted three new proposals to test interventions to improve mental health in Chicago communities.

We started C3EN with the belief that solutions to health disparities need all of us: churches, nonprofits, health providers, health departments, researchers, and community members. We are inspired by the relationships we are building, excited about the research projects in progress, and anticipating our growth—together.



Elbert Huang, MD, MPH, FACP  
University of Chicago



Elizabeth Lynch, PhD  
Rush University Medical Center



# C3EN MISSION

The Mission of the Chicago Chronic Condition Equity Network (C3EN) is to address the following priorities in partnership with community stakeholders:

Identify solutions to address inequities in multiple chronic conditions in the Chicagoland area, with a particular focus on cardiometabolic health.

Understand the role of contextual/intersectoral factors (e.g. social determinants of health, mental health, neighborhood) on development of multiple chronic conditions and the effectiveness of interventions to reduce inequities in those health conditions.

Engage community partners in a meaningful way throughout all phases of the research cycle.

Stimulate collaborations across academic institutions, clinics, regions and community organizations.



# C3EN VISION

C3EN is looking for innovative solutions to reduce health disparities in populations with multiple chronic conditions. We recognize that solutions to these problems will require partnerships with community-based organizations and local care providers in order to link “on the ground” experience with scientific knowledge and methods.

# C3EN Mission & Vision



## **Community Engagement**

To share ideas, evidence, and solutions among researchers, community members, and community partners



## **Investigator Development**

To expand and cultivate the network of health disparities researchers throughout the Chicago region

## **Sustainable Infrastructure**

To achieve an administrative infrastructure that supports and bolsters all C3EN-related activities, personnel, and stakeholders

**Real world solutions for chronic disease and health equity in the Chicago area**



**1** **Keep It Movin'**  
PIs: **Elizabeth Lynch & Steven Rothschild, Rush**  
Community Partner: **Alive Faith Network**  
A church-based intervention to improve physical function limitations in mid-life and older African Americans

**2** **VIDA**  
PI: **Arshiya Baig, UChicago**  
Community Partners: **Access Community Health Network, Advocate Aurora Health, MidWest Clinician's Network**  
A trial to address the problem of inadequate management of diabetes in middle-aged racial ethnic minorities

**3** **EngAGE**  
PI: **Megan Huisingh-Scheetz, UChicago**  
Community Partners: **AgeGuide, Age Options, Department on Aging Illinois, Mather Lifeways**  
A trial to address the problems of physical inactivity and social isolation of homebound elders

## *New Proposals*

**4** **ARCH**  
PI: **Brad Appelhans, Rush**  
Community Partner: **Paris Thomas, Equal Hope**  
A health outreach intervention for people in under-resourced communities who have depression and are at heightened cardiometabolic risk due to excess weight or physical inactivity

**5** **PORTAL-PTSD**  
PI: **Neda Laiteerapong, UChicago**  
Community Partner: **Sherry Pace, Chicago Family Health Clinics**  
A trial to improve identification of PTSD on the south side of Chicago

**6** **PTSD-Community**  
PI: **John Rich, Rush**  
Community Partner: **Morris Reed, Westside Health Authority**  
A trial to implement evidence-based treatments for PTSD in communities affected by high levels of trauma

## Community Engagement Core Goals

- To establish a **Community Stakeholder Advisory Council** to support and expand working relationships among C3EN investigators and community stakeholders such as: community-based health care providers, community- and faith-based organizations and public health departments.
- To develop a **Community-Based Research Network** structured around C3EN investigators and community stakeholders that will establish priorities for community-based research topics and facilitate partnerships between community stakeholders and early stage health disparities researchers.
- To develop a process and platform for the dissemination of actionable research results from C3EN projects to network members and the Chicago region.

## Co-Directors



**David Ansell, MD, MPH**  
Rush University Medical Center



**Sheila Dugan, MD**  
Rush University Medical Center



**Doriane Miller, MD**  
University of Chicago

## Core Support

**Christie Edwards**, Program Manager | Community Based Research Network  
**Willie Love**, Program Manager  
**Joshua Rawls**, Program Coordinator

## Community Stakeholder Advisory Council

To help identify the best solutions to address health disparities, the CSAC facilitates communication across sectors, between researchers and community stakeholders, disseminates research opportunities and findings, helps prioritize allocation of pilot funding, and provides feedback regarding C3EN projects.

### Co-Chairs



Verneda Bachus, DHA, MBA, MA  
Friend Health



Raul Garza, MS, MBA  
Aunt Martha's

**Danielle Lazar, DrPH**  
**Access Community Health Network**  
**Amit Acharya, PhD**  
**Veronica Fitzpatrick, DrPH**  
**Advocate Aurora**  
**Pastor Steve Epting**  
**Alive Faith Network**  
**Swati Goyal, MPH**  
**Ajanta Patel, MD**  
**Chicago Dept. of Public Health**  
**Sherry Pace, MBA**  
**Chicago Family Health Center**  
**Amy O'Rourke, MPH**  
**Cook County Dept. of Public Health**  
**Carlos Nelson**  
**Greater Auburn Gresham Dev. Corp.**  
**Karyn Bolden Stovall, MSW**  
**Illinois Institute of Technology**  
**Pastor Darryl Jenkins, DMin**  
**Interfaith Mental Health Coalition**

**Uche Onwuta, MS, MPH**  
**Kane County Dept. of Public Health**  
**Nallely Mora, MD, MPH, PMP**  
**Loyola University**  
**Brandon Buchanan, MHA, FACHE**  
**Sean David, MD**  
**North Shore**  
**Paris Davis, PhD, MBA**  
**Pastors4PCOR**  
**Joyce Chapman, PhD**  
**Tonya Roberson, PhD, MPH**  
**Phalanx Family Services**  
**LaDawne Jenkins, MS**  
**Rush University Medical Center**  
**Morris Reed, Esq**  
**Westside Health Authority**  
**Ayesha Jaco, MAM**  
**West Side United**

"We have some of the best institutions and community organizations in the country doing incredible work. The CSAC provides an opportunity to bring that together to solve problems."  
- Danielle Lazar, CSAC Member



## Investigator Development Core Goals

To support new researchers through the following activities:

- By creating a **Pilot Award Program** for early-stage health disparities researchers
- By offering a **Minigrant Program** to inform future research projects involving community partnerships
- By developing a mentorship program for grant awardees
- By providing research support in biostatistics, data science, and study design

## Co-Directors



**Brad Appelhans, PhD**  
Rush University Medical Center



**Arshiya Baig, MD, MPH**  
University of Chicago

## Core Support

Marshall Chin  
Paris Davis  
Ayesha Jaco  
Tricia Johnson  
Doriane Miller  
Melanie Norstrom  
Sherry Pace

Lynda Powell  
Tonya Roberson  
Julian Solway  
Sumihiro Suzuki  
Nikita Thomas  
Wen Wan

**Pilot Awards** of up to **\$60,000** provide early stage investigators with funding to obtain compelling pilot data that they can leverage to establish and sustain an NIH-funded program of health disparities research. Grantees receive mentorship from experienced investigators, access to UChicago and Rush research infrastructure, and ongoing methodological and biostatistical consultation.

**CYCLE 1                      \$260,000 distributed                      Sept. 2022 - Aug. 2023**

PI: **Merdijana Kovacevic**, PhD, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

PI: **Teresa Moro**, PhD, AM, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

PI: **Victoria Lee**, PhD, Assistant Professor, **University of Illinois Chicago**

PI: **Eleanor Rivera**, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor, **University of Illinois Chicago**

PI: **Saria Lofton**, PhD, Assistant Professor, **University of Illinois Chicago**

**CYCLE 2                      \$380,000 distributed                      Apr. 2023 - Mar. 2024**

PI: **Elizabeth Tung**, MD, MS, Assistant Professor, **University of Chicago**

PI: **Fabian Sierra Morales**, MD, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

PI: **Kirsten Dickins**, PhD, AM, APRN, FNP-C, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

PI: **Li-Ting Longcoy**, PhD, DrPH, Postdoctoral Fellow, **University of Illinois Chicago**

PI: **Sarah Sobotka**, MD, MSCP, Assistant Professor, **University of Chicago**

PI: **Rachel Boutté**, PhD, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

PI: **Chuka Emezue**, PhD, MPH, MPA, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

**CYCLE 3                      \$350,000 distributed                      Sept. 2023 - Apr. 2024**

PI: **Victoria Flores**, MS, PhD, Postdoctoral Research Associate, **University of Illinois Chicago**

Co-PIs: **Anne Hoffman**, PhD, CCC-SLP, & **Lauren Little**, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, Associate Professors, **Rush University**

PI: **Mohan Zalake**, PhD, Research Assistant Professor, **University of Illinois Chicago**

PI: **Shilpa Iyer**, MD, MPH, Assistant Professor, **University of Chicago**

PI: **Milkie Vu**, PhD, Assistant Professor, **Northwestern University**

PI: **Melissa Gutierrez-Kapheim**, PhD, Director of Health Equity and Assessment Research, **Sinai Urban Health Institute**

**Minigrants** of up to **\$3,000** support well-defined formative and summative research activities that strengthen community partnerships around health disparities research.

PI: **Chuka Emezue**, PhD, MPH, MPA, Assistant Professor, **Rush University Medical Center**

PI: **Susan Tran**, PhD, Associate Professor, **DePaul University**

PI: **Dedeepya Konuthula**, MD, Fellow, **University of Chicago**

PI: **Daniel Schober**, PhD, Assistant Professor, **DePaul University**

## Administrative Core Goals

- To achieve a sustainable administrative infrastructure that supports and bolsters all activities and stakeholders
- To coordinate activities and communication across all three cores and with the Data Coordinating Center
- To establish and maintain a **Scientific Advisory Council**
- To provide access to scientific and technical expertise for funded research projects
- To disseminate the results of research with partners in the community

## Administrative Core Leadership



**Yolanda Cartwright, PhD**  
Rush University Medical Center



**Rachel Jantke, PhD**  
University of Chicago



**Tricia Johnson, PhD**  
Rush University Medical Center

## Core Support

Christie Edwards  
Irene Hsiao  
Melanie Norstrom

Michael Quinn  
Cris Rodriguez  
Nikita Thomas



## Scientific Advisory Council

To advise upon the scientific direction of C3EN and ensure that C3EN activities and opportunities are disseminated across academic communities

### Co-Chairs



**Ron Ackermann, MD, MPH**  
Northwestern University



**Molly Martin, MD**  
University of Illinois at Chicago

**Mark Atkins**  
University of Illinois at Chicago  
**Lisa Barnes**  
Rush University Medical Center  
**Marshall Chin**  
University of Chicago  
**Joshua Jacobs**  
Rush University Medical Center  
**Wrenetha Julion**  
Rush University Medical Center

**Stacy Lindau**  
University of Chicago  
**Monica Peek**  
University of Chicago  
**Lynda Powell**  
Rush University Medical Center  
**Julian Solway**  
University of Chicago  
**Clyde Yancy**  
Northwestern University



# C3EN Highlights 2022-2023

C3EN co-hosted with University of Chicago Center for Chronic Disease Research & Policy a full-day event featuring a symposium titled **The Art & Science of Public Health Communication** as a lead up to C3EN's first **Annual Meeting**.

C3EN's Community-Based Research Network developed the **Social Network Analysis Survey (SNA)** and learned from 32 respondents how they improve the health of the community and work together.

C3EN researchers and community partners submitted proposals for **three new, co-developed research projects** to the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities.

**Community Town Halls** in the City of Aurora and Chicago's Austin, Greater Auburn-Gresham, Homan Square, Pilsen, West Pullman, and West Town, reached 149 community members who shared their concerns and priorities for improving the health and well being of their neighborhoods in direct dialogue with C3EN researchers. Community participants centered assessing community needs as the first step in prioritizing research projects to ensure that they can have the greatest impact by helping the people most in need.

C3EN with West Side United, UChicago Institute for Translational Medicine, and the Chicago Consortium for Community Engagement cohosted the **Chicago Health Equity Alignment Summit** at Malcolm X College. Nearly 300 community leaders, researchers, and community members attended including many young researchers who showed high interest in conducting community engaged research.

**1st**

Annual Meeting  
Oct. 25, 2022

**3**

New NIH Grants  
Submitted

**7**

Town Halls  
Feb. - Aug. 2023

**\$12K**

Minigrants  
Awarded

**\$990K**

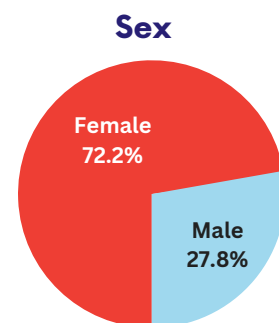
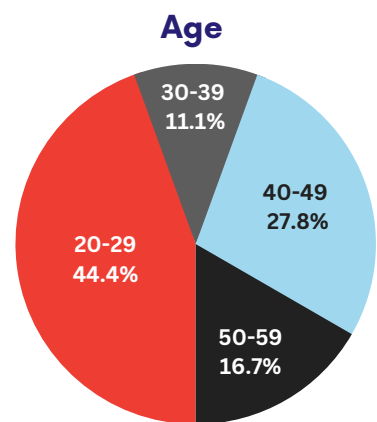
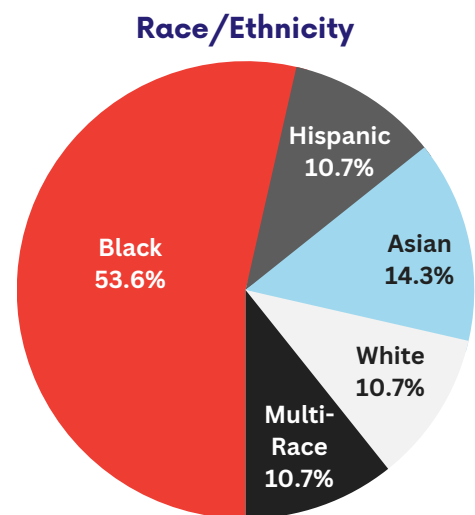
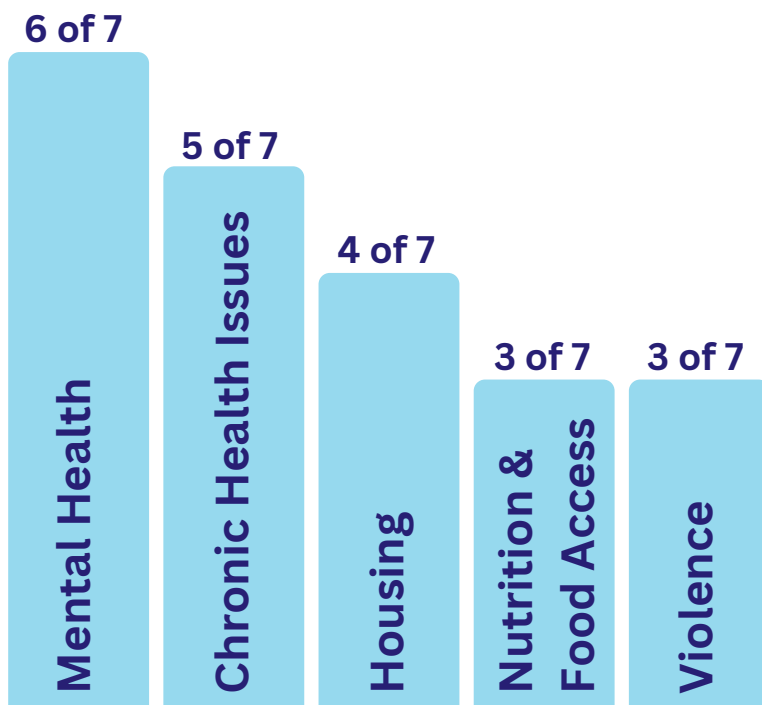
Pilot Awards  
Funded

**Community Town Halls** focused on understanding chronic health issues from the community perspective using a **human-centered, co-design** approach.

**Human-centered design** puts real people at the center of the research, design, and development process, enabling the creation of products and services that people are willing and able to use in their lives.

**Co-design** refers to a participatory approach to designing solutions, in which community members are treated as equal collaborators in the design process.

**Health Priorities from Community Perspective    Survey Respondent Demographics**  
**7 Town Halls (Average Attendance = 21)**



**Prompts & Questions**

- What health issues/concerns are on your mind?
- How should health issues be prioritized for research and development of solutions?
- Let us discuss as groups and prioritize the health issues listed in our first step.
- How do you feel about "research"?



"I want my research to contribute to positive changes for individuals, their families, and the teams providing their care."  
 Teresa Moro, Pilot Awardee



**c3en** chicago chronic condition equity network

**ink factory**  
you talk, we draw, it's awesome.



"I would like for people to go from being an everyday resident to being a person who's at the table contributing to decision-making in their environment."  
 Joshua Rawls, Community Engagement Core

# C3EN Goals for 2023-2024

Collaborate to develop new studies to test interventions to address the major priorities identified by communities:  
**violence, mental health, and chronic disease**



Continue Pilot Awards and Minigrants and provide training opportunities for recipients

Publish findings from C3EN Research Projects

Support ongoing (**CIRCL**) and new partner projects (**ESCALATR, IncomeRx, Quest 4 Health Equity**)

Increase participation by underrepresented groups in future funding cycles

Further develop the Community-Based Research Network

C3EN acknowledges the support of the **National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities**.

Annual Report Team

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The University of Chicago and  
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[www.c3en.org](http://www.c3en.org)

"I'd like to see south side youth have access to activities that challenge them and give them a sense of purpose and a place to feel they belong and can have a direction as far as their everyday struggle."

- Derric Clemmons, resident of Chicago's south side

"It is our responsibility to maximize the use of the tools we have been fortunate to receive to make the world a better place." - Megan Huisinigh-Scheetz, EnGAGE PI

"My dad's family escaped the Nazis in the late 1930s, so it was understood that sitting on the sidelines wasn't ever going to be an option." - Steven K. Rothschild, KIM co-PI

C3EN thanks all of our members for your partnership.

