Improving Mild Cognitive Impairment Screening Among African-Americans

**Description:** This project aimed to better understand the perceptions surrounding memory loss within the African-American community and how these perceptions affect willingness to be screened for mild cognitive impairment (MCI). The long-term goal is to use the information from this study to design more effective and culturally sensitive screening strategies and interviews for African-Americans.

**Relevance:** African-Americans are at twice the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease compared to Caucasians. They are also more likely to be diagnosed later than Caucasians and are less likely to receive appropriate treatments and services. One way to lower the delay between disease onset and diagnosis is by developing strategies that screen for predictive conditions.

MCI is an intermediate stage between full cognitive health and the development of dementia. Early screening and diagnosis of MCI can help identify individuals who are at risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Understanding the barriers that prevent MCI screening within the African-American community is a first step in developing strategies to identify Alzheimer’s disease earlier in African-Americans.

**Results:** To determine which factors affected the willingness of African-Americans to be screened for MCI, the study authors interviewed hundreds of people at community events. The authors discovered that educating African-Americans about the benefits of screening and early detection, increasing social support for screening efforts and addressing concerns about potential social stigma could boost screenings.

Based on data from this project, the authors designed a health promotion intervention, the Memory Partners Project. This intervention targets older African-Americans who are at elevated risk of developing MCI and dementia due to cardiovascular risk factors such as diabetes and hypertension. The goal is to modify “Living Well,” an evidence-based chronic disease self-management program to improve engagement of African-Americans with mild memory loss. Modifications such as additional social support and greater emphasis on maintaining overall health to promote brain health focus on the benefits of being proactive.