

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

KEEPING OUR COMMUNITIES CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

From the Director's Desk

Issue 23, March 2022

OBSERVING COLORECTAL CANCER & MULTIPLE MYELOMA AWARENESS

We began 2022 with great momentum, and we are continuing that positive progress as we finally head toward the spring. I am excited for the return of the bright blue sky, trees lush with leaves and flowers in all their splendor, soon.

March is also certain to be eventful at our office as we observe both Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month and Multiple Myeloma Awareness Month.

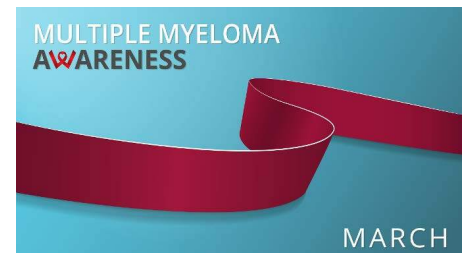
Colorectal cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death in the U.S. among men and women, according to the American Cancer Society. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by colorectal cancer at the highest rate of any racial group in the



country, but there's hope. Colorectal cancer is both preventable and treatable. Screening has improved and treatment has come a long way.

Multiple myeloma is a rare blood cancer that develops in the bone marrow, the soft, spongy inside of most bones.

Multiple myeloma affects African Americans at twice the rate of other racial groups. Lack of access to appropriate treatment along



with a lack of awareness present additional disparities, according to the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation. We are working to overcome these barriers by shedding more light on this cancer and how it is treated.

Each coordinator, community health advisor, community partner, and staff member is integral to this effort.

Claudia

O'NEAL COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER
UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

COMMUNITY OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT

Program Director:
Claudia Hardy

Health Initiatives Manager:
Rochelle Wallace

Newsletter Editor:
Joseph D. Bryant

**CONTACT US FOR ADDITIONAL HEALTH
INFORMATION AND RESOURCES:**

EMAIL: coeinfo@uab.edu
PHONE: (205) 975-0003

COLORECTAL CANCER FACTS

- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States.
- Only about two-thirds of adults in the United States are up to date with colorectal cancer screening.
- Precancerous polyps and colorectal cancer don't always show symptoms, especially at first. If you have symptoms, they may include blood in or on the stool, abdominal pain that doesn't go away, or unexplained weight loss. If you have any of these symptoms, see your doctor.
- During a colonoscopy screening, doctors can find and remove most polyps and some cancers.
- Colorectal cancer screening saves lives.

- FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

INCREASING ACCESS: WIDESPREAD PARTNERSHIP BRINGING COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENINGS TO WEST ALABAMA IN APRIL



Access to essential colorectal cancer screening is expanding for residents living in west Alabama through a collaboration between Whitfield Regional Hospital (a member of the UAB Health Systems Affiliates), UAB Medicine and the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center.

These medical and outreach teams are partnering to provide 60 free colonoscopies for people living in Marengo, Sumter, Choctaw, Greene and Hale counties.

On March 16 and 17, Whitfield Hospital will host a colorectal cancer awareness event in an effort to sign up individuals for colorectal cancer screenings. These screenings will be held at Whitfield Regional Hospital in Demopolis from April 11 - 15.

Fifteen county coordinators and CHAs with the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement are working to promote the service and

encourage widespread participation within the five-county area. "Our office is excited to be among the partners for this worthwhile activity", said Program Director Claudia Hardy. "Our coordinators in these west Alabama counties are key to spreading the word about this important service to friends, family and neighbors. Whitfield is making it available to individuals regardless of their ability to pay."

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. African Americans are disproportionately impacted by colorectal cancer at the highest rate of any racial group in the country. However, colorectal cancer is both preventable and treatable.

Colonoscopy screening can help prevent colorectal cancer by detecting and allowing for removal of precancerous growths. "Our region has some of the highest rates of COPD, congestive heart

failure, hypertension, diabetes and rates of cancer in our country," explained Whitfield Regional Hospital Chief Executive Officer Douglas Brewer. "This, coupled with the fact that it is also one of the most medically underserved areas of our country, underscores the importance of programs such as the upcoming colonoscopy screening that we are planning in partnership with UAB."



Douglas Brewer

Gregory Kennedy, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Division of Gastrointestinal Surgery and co-medical director of the Cancer Service Line, said the relationship with Whitfield Regional Medical Center continues to grow. Quince Gibson, M.D., a gastrointestinal surgeon in Demopolis, is also a UAB faculty member.



Dr. Gregory Kennedy

“We hope that by serving the community in this fashion we will increase the awareness of colon and rectal cancer for patients in this county, as well as extend our

reach throughout the Black Belt of Alabama,” Kennedy said. “We strongly believe that access to care is a major problem for patients in the Black Belt of Alabama. In an attempt to eliminate this particular source of disparity, we are committed to bringing providers to the patients and their communities.”

“By spending the month of March increasing awareness and promoting the screenings in April, we hope to enhance knowledge and eliminate the fear often associated with colorectal cancer screening,” he explained. “We hope our presence and commitment to the community also increases the level of trust the

residents of Demopolis have in the surgeons of UAB. We hope that this increased trust will ultimately culminate in increasing rates of cancer screening in general.”

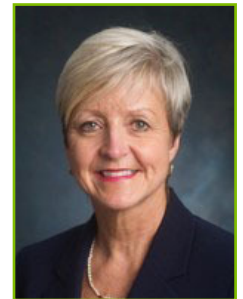
While UAB has taken services to several locations across the state, the activity at Whitfield will be the first large scale event designed to increase awareness of colorectal cancer.

“UAB Health System Cancer Community Network works with organizations in the community to help address the local gaps in care. Whitfield Regional Hospital and their team are great examples of how these partnerships can work together to help overcome the hurdles that may exist to gain access to quality cancer prevention, screening, treatment and supportive services,” said Director of Cancer Center Affiliates Terri Salter. “Identifying resources and partners in the community to help provide screening and treatment close to home helps get us closer to improving the health of the people in Marengo and the surrounding counties. Thank you

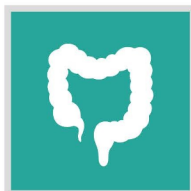
to Whitfield Hospital, physicians and team members,” Salter said.

In Demopolis, Brewer said the hospital's association with UAB brings long-term benefit to residents in the region. The colonoscopies represent a strong example, he said.

“UAB has been instrumental in helping us better provide care to our region through telehealth and direct hands-on care for many of these chronic care patients. This support has allowed us to begin providing programs and services that have never been offered in this region,” Brewer said. “For the first time residents of the Black Belt are able to access surgeons and specialists able to assist them in improving their lives and beginning to change the way future generations will live through healthier living.”



Terri Salter



COLON on the CORNER

COLONOSCOPY AWARENESS & SIGN-UP DAYS

MARCH 16 & 17

11am - 2pm

SIGN UP TO SCHEDULE YOUR COLONOSCOPY FOR APRIL 11-15

**LOTS OF FOOD!!!
GIVEAWAYS!!!!**

FRONT LOBBY
WRH



THE RESEARCH CORNER

BROWN LEADS CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND AND TREAT MULTIPLE MYELOMA, ADDRESS DISPARITIES



Elizabeth E. Brown, Ph.D., MPH is co-leader of the Cancer Control and Population Sciences Program at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Research based at the University of Alabama at Birmingham also stands among the forefront of efforts to better understand, predict and treat multiple myeloma and its related illnesses. With this in mind, the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement has focused to bring awareness to this rare blood cancer.

Elizabeth E. Brown, Ph.D., MPH, co-leader of the Cancer Control and Population Sciences Program at the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center, has dedicated much of her career to solving the mysteries of multiple myeloma, including its disproportionate effect on African Americans.

Multiple myeloma is a rare blood cancer that develops in the bone marrow, the soft, spongy inside of most bones. Cancer occurs when blood cells that fight infection begin behaving in a way that leads to the accumulation of tumor cells in the bone marrow space.

A major aspect of Brown's research is advancing the understanding of multiple myeloma risk, outcomes and disparities in morbidity and mortality observed by race and ethnicity.

"Multiple myeloma is the second most common blood cancer in the

US and is the most common blood cancer among African Americans," she said. "From a population perspective, the incidence is almost three times higher for Black Americans than White Americans for reasons that we don't yet understand. Although the incidence of multiple myeloma is higher, the five-year survival rate is about the same for both Black Americans and White Americans, which leads us to believe that underlying differences in how early tumor cells behave may predispose Black Americans to greater risk."

Brown's research spans several projects and multiple collaborators and institutions. In 2021, Brown was awarded a \$3.1 million grant from the National Cancer Institute to support her research of monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance, known as MGUS, in African Americans. MGUS is a precursor illness to multiple myeloma.

Brown seeks to understand the genetic and environmental factors that play a role in developing the disease.

Her study is the largest to investigate effects that influence risk and progression of MGUS into multiple myeloma and the impact of

race. The study includes more than 20,000 participants from nine sites across the country.

Brown ultimately seeks to enhance screening practices and deliver more personalized approaches to treatment.

Brown's multiple myeloma research is also international. She collaborates with the International Lymphoma and Epidemiology Consortium (InterLymph), which includes more than 100 partners from the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia.

Brown is a founding member of the InterLymph - Multiple Myeloma Working Group and serves as chair of the InterLymph Coordinating Committee, which sets research priorities regarding myeloma and lymphoma research.

"Myeloma is one of the O'Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center's priority cancers, in part, because it disproportionately affects our community and we want to meet the needs of the population we serve," Brown said. "Even though it is a rare cancer, we want to make an important impact in our community. It is an exciting time to be involved in myeloma research to improve people's lives."

COMMUNITY PROFILE: NAVY SUNDAY

GLORIA SHIELDS USES PARTNERS AND PERSONAL CONNECTIONS TO PROMOTE NAVY SUNDAY IN EFFORTS TO BRING ATTENTION TO COLORECTAL CANCER AWARENESS

Expect to see Gloria Shields wearing something navy several times this month, especially on Sundays.

Shields, Yazoo County, Mississippi, community outreach coordinator for the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement at the O’Neal Comprehensive Cancer Center at UAB, uses the annual Navy Sunday as an opportunity to connect with people and generate interest regarding colorectal cancer screening, prevention and early detection.

“I have the ribbons to give to them as well as my tool kit information,” Shields said. “I will also be giving them gift bags with the educational items.”

OCOE has long-standing partnerships with churches and faith-based organizations throughout Alabama and Mississippi who help provide essential information on cancer early detection and screening. The annual Navy Sunday for Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month each March is an effective tool to bring attention to this disease.

“Navy Sunday gives us another avenue to begin conversations that might otherwise be a bit tense,” explained OCOE Health Initiatives Manager Rochelle Wallace. “Days like these give health advocates and educators opportunities to present information in a comfortable setting and in a format that is more comfortable for audiences. In fact, Navy Sunday has grown in popularity so much over the years



Gloria Shields, Yazoo County, Mississippi, community outreach coordinator, participates in the Healthy You Health Fair in 2021. This year, Shields continues to promote colorectal awareness during Navy Sunday and other Navy events in March.

that we have extended the Navy theme to any day in the month of March.”

In 2021, Shields brought Navy Sunday to her own church, Daybreak Missionary Baptist Church in Belzoni, Mississippi.

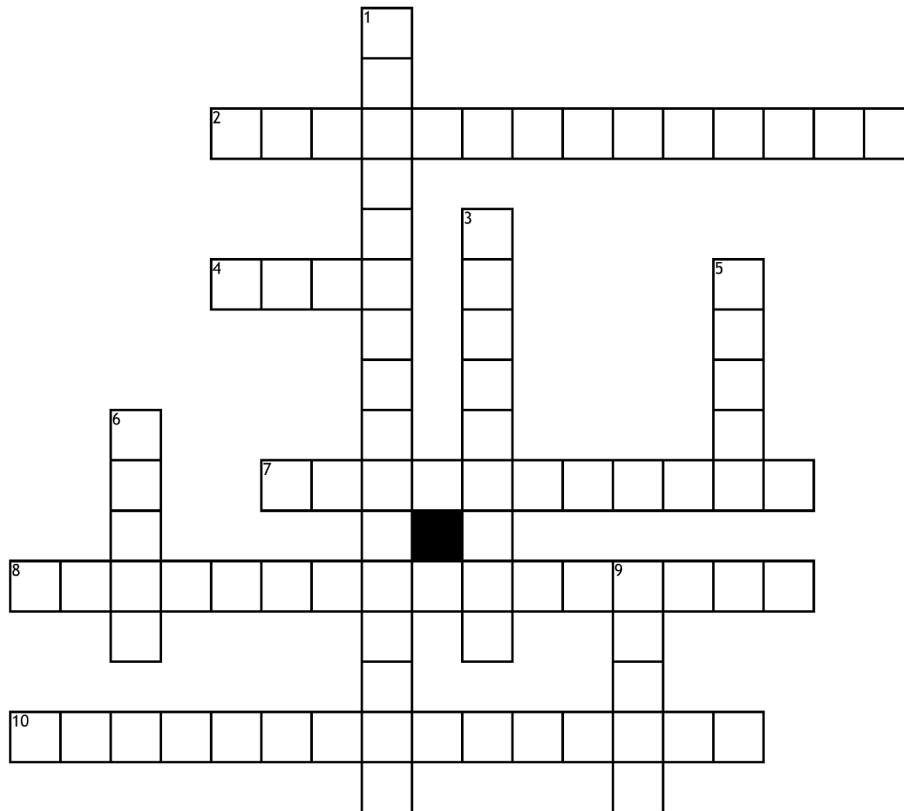
“The day is observed even as some churches meet virtually where partnering pastors and members discuss Navy Sunday and its significance,” Shields said.

The need for outreach remains clear. Colorectal cancer disproportionately affects African Americans at rates higher than any

other racial or ethnic group in the country. African Americans are about 20 percent more likely to get colorectal cancer and are about 40 percent more likely to die from it than most other groups, according to the American Cancer Society.



2022 March Cancer Awareness



Across

- 2. _____ saves lives.
- 4. Men are _____ likely to be diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma than women.
- 7. Screening tool used to detect colorectal cancer.
- 8. _____ are diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma twice as often as white Americans.
- 10. _____ is a rare blood cancer.

Down

- 1. March is Multiple Myeloma Awareness Month and _____ Awareness Month.
- 3. Colorectal cancer can be _____
- 5. A precancerous growth that may be found in the colon.
- 6. Colorectal cancer is the _____ leading cause of cancer death in men and women in the US.
- 9. Colorectal cancer can start in either the _____ or rectum.



HAPPY RETIREMENT!

Congratulations to Darlene Robinson, longtime coordinator for Greene and Hale counties on her recent retirement from OCOE. We salute you for your many years of dedicated service toward improving the health of our communities and ending health disparities.

“I believe that it is important, because as African Americans and with the men they don’t say ‘Hey, it’s time for my annual,’ unless they have other underlying conditions,” Shields said. “My goal is to also try to reach a younger generation and get them starting out early.”

This year, Shields is collaborating with Tulane Missionary Baptist Church in Yazoo City. The church has a robust health ministry where Shields found a natural partner with chairperson Jennifer McKee.

“Gloria has partnered with us before, so we are always happy to join with her to spread the word, not only to our congregation, but the entire community,” McKee said.

For example, Tulane has virtual services through Facebook where messages are posted. The church also operates a community store to provide goods to neighbors. Cancer awareness material is included and given to the people who are in line.

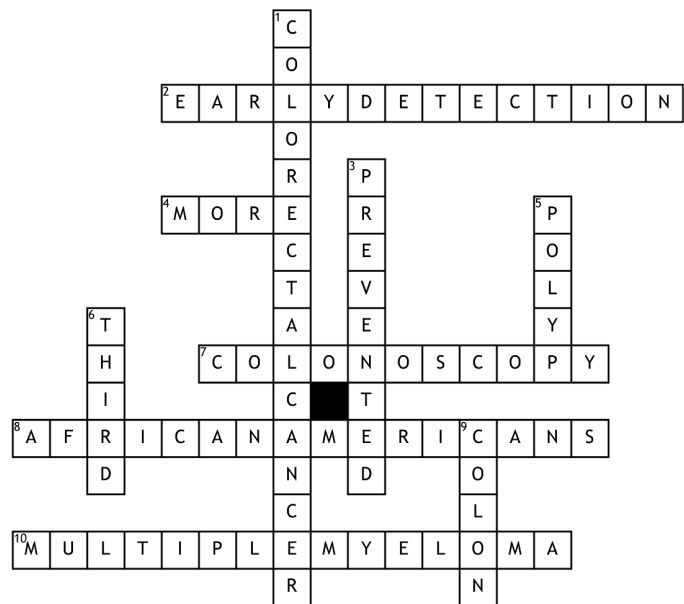
The church also collaborates with the Mississippi Delta Health Collaborative through the Mississippi State Department of Health, an early partner of OCOE.

“I find that people are little more open now, but we still have a way to go with bringing awareness and getting people to say, ‘Yes, I am going to get checked,’” McKee said. “The more that we can bring awareness and they can get it from a place that they trust, then that helps. The ministry has been good, and what Gloria has done has been helpful in the Yazoo community.”



Tulane Missionary Baptist Church in Yazoo City, Mississippi presents a retail and redistribution store and food pantry. The health ministry also uses the event as an opportunity to present essential health awareness material.

2022 March Cancer Awareness



Across

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UPCOMING EVENTS

WHAT IS MULTIPLE MYELOMA?

O'NEAL COMPREHENSIVE
CANCER CENTER
UAB THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Did you know that...

- Multiple myeloma, a rare blood cancer, is more than twice as common in African Americans than in white Americans?
- Men are slightly more likely to develop multiple myeloma than women?

To learn more about this uncommon blood cancer, join us via Zoom or conference call for this virtual event!

Source: American Cancer Society



MARCH 1, 2022

5:30 PM

REGISTER: [GO.UAB.EDU/COE-MM22](https://go.uab.edu/coe-mm22)

GUEST SPEAKER:

Elizabeth Brown, Ph.D., MPH

Professor, UAB Division of Molecular & Cellular Pathology



PREVENTING COLORECTAL CANCER

Colorectal cancer is the third-leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Please join us to learn more about preventing this disease.

Source: American Cancer Society



Guest Speaker: Dr. Gregory Kennedy

Professor and Director of Gastrointestinal Surgery at UAB

MARCH 14 @ 5:30 PM

JOIN VIA ZOOM OR CONFERENCE CALL

REGISTER: [GO.UAB.EDU/COE-PREVENTCC](https://go.uab.edu/coe-preventcc)

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Call: 205-975-0003

Email: coeinfo@uab.edu

In April, the Office of Community Outreach & Engagement will observe National Minority Health Awareness Month and National Cancer Control Month. We will discuss minority health disparities and minority participation in clinical trials.