

## What were the goals of the Oregon Health & Science University HBRN?

The Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) Prevention Research Center partnered with the C. Rex and Ruth Layton Aging and Alzheimer's Disease Center to create the Oregon Healthy Brain Research Network (OR-HBRN). Located at OHSU, the OR-HBRN focused on two research projects on African American cognitive health. The studies aimed to maintain or improve cognitive health in ways that celebrate the vitality and richness of African American culture. It also worked to discern how African American adults understand cognitive health to improve public health aging messages. Additional OR-HBRN goals included:

- 1) Establishing a research agenda on cognitive health and healthy aging.
- 2) Advancing collaborative and applied research in cognitive health.
- 3) Supporting fellowship training of its scholars.

## What did OR-HBRN Accomplish?

First, the **Sharing History through Active Reminiscence and Photo-imagery (SHARP)** Pilot Study tested the feasibility of a multimodal and culturally celebratory intervention. SHARP engaged 19 cognitively healthy African Americans, aged 55 and over, in walking, social engagement, and community memories to promote physical and cognitive health. The SHARP smartphone application, developed with the Oregon Center for Aging

and Technology, guided small groups on walks with GPS-triggered local historical images (memory markers) to spark memories and conversations about Portland's black history. Participant testing helped refine the smartphone app and the study's cultural relevance. Smartphone use was improved by the application's community focus, and it captured participant narratives for an oral historical archive. The study laid the foundation for other work, including developing two community resources: a culturally celebratory online brain health resource and a community learning session framework, available at [www.healthyaging.org](http://www.healthyaging.org). To learn more, visit [www.SHARPwalkingstudy.org](http://www.SHARPwalkingstudy.org).



Study participants engaged in the OR-HBRN SHARP pilot study.



Second, the African American Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) Focus Group Study used the BRFSS Cognitive Impairment and Caregiver modules to increase researchers' understanding of how African Americans 45 and older experienced memory loss and family caregiving and how the participants understood terms and phrases such as "memory loss, confusion, and dementia." Thirty participants understood the terms as they related to conditions affecting their relationships and placed less emphasis on the terms' clinical meaning. Results informed new culturally relevant cognitive health messaging, outreach materials, and surveys for African American communities.

Additionally, the OR-HBRN was a collaborative partner on two cross-center manuscripts: the HBRN Nomenclature Systematic Review which examined gaps and commonalities in how providers and researchers use and understand cognitive health related terms, and the HBRN scholars training framework.

Over the 5-year grant period (2014–2019), the OR-HBRN presented at two national lectures, and made 22 scientific presentations at national and international conferences.

## What is the HBRN Scholars Program?

HBRN Scholars collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), community partners, and other HBRN universities on research projects. The scholars' program pilots, develops, and shares models for scholarly, cognitive health engagement across local and national networks. Participation in the HBRN significantly strengthened the academic portfolios of our HBRN scholars. Three scholars

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have been accepted into graduate programs in public health and sociology, focusing on aging research and health disparities at the University of Washington, Portland State University, and Columbia University. CDC's HBRN support helped secure subsequent funding from the Alzheimer's Association and National Institute on Aging Diversity Supplement to continue our work developing SHARP to serve the older African American community.



Raina Croff, PhD



Jeffrey Kaye, MD

Raina Croff, PhD, and Jeffrey Kaye, MD, led the Oregon HBRN member center efforts to address the Healthy Brain Initiative Road Map action item "to educate and empower." Dr. Croff (croff@ohsu.edu) is Assistant Professor of Neurology focusing on how culture affects health, acting as a lens through which people interpret health literature, messaging, programming, and research participation, and how cultural shifts in neighborhoods affect older adults' daily, cognitively healthy behaviors. Dr. Croff served as co-chair of the HBRN Scholars workgroup that developed a framework for cross-center scholar training.

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