**INTRODUCTION**

**THE RESOURCE CENTERS FOR MINORITY AGING RESEARCH (RCMAR): COMMUNITY/RESEARCHER INTERACTION AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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For more than a decade, the National Institute on Aging (NIA) has led a program called the Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR). One of the four key components of the RCMARs is a Community Liaison Core whose objectives are to conduct research on recruiting community members for scientific studies and to facilitate working relationships with host communities. The articles in this supplement represent some of the scientific knowledge available on community-based participatory research (CBPR) at the RCMARs. The hope is that this supplement will motivate others involved in CBPR to more fully engage in the conduct of science related to relationships that mutually benefit communities and researchers. (Ethn Dis. 2007;17[suppl 1]:S1-1–S1-2)

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persons even though CBPR as a research strategy has existed for some time. It is important to apply the same research rigor to the process of constructing and maintaining working relationships with diverse communities as it is to the recruitment and retention issue so that mutual benefit can be assured. Without this knowledge, community/research relationships will remain anecdotal and based upon trial-and-error methods that may benefit neither community nor science. Without this careful approach, there will be too little science to translate.

We know that conducting research within diverse communities takes extraordinary amounts of time and effort to gain the trust of both the community leadership and its membership. Yet, too often open and ready access to communities is simply “assumed” prior to a research project, producing significant delays in the conduct of research, significant “cost-overruns,” and often questionable results. The American Indian/Alaska Native communities, in general, have structured a mechanism for handling CBPR and therefore community access. This mechanism is used as a model of community protection and involvement benefitting both the community and furthering the assurance of excellence in research. While time consuming, it does lead to a respect for the traditions and integrity of the community, a sense of trust among participants, and an assurance that research results are valid in the minds of the participants. Portions of this model may be worth emulating.

To overcome the lack of scientific investigation in how to work with diverse communities of older persons so as to benefit both community and science, the Community Liaison Cores of the six RCMARs (see Acknowledgments) conducted a well-attended symposium prior to the Gerontological Society of America’s annual meeting in 2004. The articles appearing in this supplement are the product of that symposium. As such, they represent some of the most current scientific knowledge available on this topic from both researchers at the RCMARs as well as from the perspective of key community members. It is hoped that this supplement will motivate others involved in community-based participatory research among diverse older populations to more fully engage in the conduct of science related to community/researcher relationships benefitting both groups. Without this type of commitment to CBPR, research will be conducted within the community rather than with the community. Further, without a commitment to the development of the science behind CBPR, we are likely to be unsuccessful at advancing scientifically gained knowledge of diverse older communities that mutually benefits community and science. The RCMAR program remains committed to advancing the science of community-based participatory research.

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