Health and Health Care Disparities

Definition of the problem:

People who are homeless have high incidence and prevalence of physical illnesses that are further exacerbated by co-occurring serious mental illnesses. African Americans are disproportionally affected by homelessness with as many as 50% of homeless people being African American. We proposed to understand the intersection of homelessness, ethnic minorities and mental illness as conditions and ameliorate their impact on the lives of African Americans in Chicago’s Edgewater-Uptown neighborhood, an area shown in census data to be among the most challenged in these regards in the United States. Although integrated care programs have been developed for this population, they have had limited impact in part because they have not fully incorporated the voice of the homeless in development and implementation. Hence community based participatory research (CBPR) targeting the health care needs of African Americans who are homeless with serious mental illness is being used in this project. A Consumer Research Team (CRT) comprised of African Americans with lived experience and co-chaired by the co-PIs including an African American with lived experience will be established. The project will also include a pilot investigation of the acceptability and impact of this intervention.

Aims of the project:

- Establish a Consumer Research Team (CRT) which will comprise of African Americans with lives experience and other key stakeholders.
- The CRT will conduct a community needs assessment to identify the disease or condition for intervention. This will yield the development of a corresponding intervention grounded in integrated care.
• A pilot will be conducted to examine feasibility, acceptability and impact of the intervention as well as the CBPR experience among the CRT.

Method

To define the problem qualitative interviews will be conducted with people with lived experience and other stakeholders. This information will then be cross-validated with a second group in a quantitative survey. The CRT will use this information to design an intervention using an integrated care model. Feasibility, acceptability and impact of the intervention will then be tested in a pilot evaluation.