

Understanding the Social and Behavioral Processes of Aging: Native Elder Research Center/Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR)

The Native Elder Research Center (NERC) is focused on increasing capacity, improving networks, and expanding active partnerships among Native American and Alaska-Native researchers focused on studying issues pertinent to Native elder health.

Lead Agency:

National Institute on Aging (NIA)/National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Agency Mission:

- Support and conduct genetic, biological, clinical, behavioral, social, and economic research related to the aging process, diseases and conditions associated with aging, and other special problems and needs of older Americans.
- Foster the development of research and clinician scientists in aging.
- Communicate information about aging and advances in research on aging to the scientific community, health care providers, and the public.

Principle Investigator:

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Partner Agencies:

National Center for Minority Health and Health Disparities (NCMHD)

General Description:

This Resource Center for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR) is coordinated through the University of Colorado and has the following programmatic aims: 1) to enhance the administrative structure, supported by a large, comprehensive array of relevant AI/AN programs, required to direct and coordinate a culturally relevant, scientifically meritorious effort of this

nature; 2) to expand active partnerships with AI/AN communities that insure continuous access to and involvement of Native elders, their families, and local systems of care in the aging research process; 3) to expand an extensive network of collaborative links to identify, recruit, and to promote a cadre of AI/AN investigators willing to commit themselves to developing their potential as scientists specializing in aging research; 4) to improve a carefully crafted set of mechanisms, informed by nearly two decades of experience, to equip AI/AN investigators for successful research careers at the interface of aging, health, and culture; 5) to enlarge an existing group of investigators to include even more diverse disciplinary expertise of an exceptionally qualified nature that can address a broad range of high-priority questions related to the aging of Native elders, and 6) to promote a program of research that holds promise for reducing the differentials in health status and care which now plague this special population.

Excellence: What makes this project exceptional?

This is one of the few sustained projects in Indian County that focuses upon training native investigators for careers in research on AN/AI older populations. They have been extremely successful in attracting and keeping outstanding native investigators.

Significance: How is this research relevant to older persons, populations and/or an aging society?

In comparison to their counterparts in the general population, Native elders are at greater risk for numerous acute as well as chronic illnesses, suffer more frequent comorbidities, have less access to high quality and needed services, and are slower to seek care which often leads to more serious and complicated presentations. The NERC RCMAR has contributed significantly to closing these gaps and to increasing the participation of Native people in related research.

Innovativeness: Why is this research exciting or newsworthy?

Several significant findings have been published in peer-reviewed journals.