The Southeast Center for Research to Reduce Disparities in Oral Health (SCRRDOH) is a multi-disciplinary research center at the University of Florida College of Dentistry built on strong community partnerships. The center is a synergistic force aimed at a measurable reduction of disparities in oral health among the underserved, through intervention projects that are based on the best science available and rely on participation of local residents in all phases, from designing research to collecting data to publicizing results and influencing public policy. Dr. Henrietta Logan is the Director, with Dr. Lorena Baccaglini as Co-director and Dr. Keith Muller serving as director of the Statistics & Data Coordinating Center.

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### Introduction

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**Objectives**

The research mission of the SCRRDOH is to:

- Promote early detection and prevention of head and neck cancer among low income rural and minority individuals in Florida.
- Provide new resources through which multi-disciplinary teams jointly conduct targeted community-based intervention research.
- Strengthen the partnerships among researchers, clinicians, and the community.

Applications will be sought from new and established scientists for studies addressing health disparities that will lead to community-based interventions. Working with health economists, we anticipate building an evidence base about the cost-effectiveness of new interventions that hold promise for reducing oral health disparities, including cost-effectiveness studies of early versus late stage detection head and neck cancer.

The research conducted by the SCRRDOH will affect public policy and result in long-term benefits among Florida’s most disadvantaged citizens.

### Partnerships

Partners with SCRRDOH include the following:

- Florida Department of Health
- Florida Dental Association
- Florida National Dental Association
- Florida Dental Hygiene Association
- Florida A&M University
- State Oral Health Improvement Plan
- Oral Cancer Working Group
- Alachua County Organization for Rural Needs (ACORN)
- regional ministerial networks

### About Head and Neck Cancer

The American Cancer Society estimates that approximately 34,400 new cases will be diagnosed in the next year, with a disproportionate burden on rural, low-income minority men. In the U.S., there are more than 11,210 deaths per year from head and neck cancer, compared to 3,670 for cervical cancer.

Survival from head and neck cancer is one of the lowest among all malignancies; it has not improved in recent decades and remains about 58%. Florida has the fifth highest mortality rate in the U.S. The 5-year survival rate is much lower among African Americans (40%) than whites (62%). The mortality rate of African American men from head and neck cancer is approximately 3 times the overall rate for US adults.

Many cases among African Americans are diagnosed at a more advanced stage, when treatments are more expensive, aggressive, and disfiguring.

### The Team

### Funded Research

The purpose of the center’s first community-based intervention led by Dr. Joseph L. Riley III is to apply scientific health promotion models to increase screening for head and neck cancer among rural African American men.

First, small groups of community members will provide ideas on adapting existing promotional material and messages. The goal of the input from these meetings is to make the material and messages more acceptable and persuasive for the targeted audience.

Next, these materials will be used in a year-long media campaign that will provide information about head and neck cancer and encourage screening.

Finally, the impact of the media campaign on rates of screening will be measured in the media-targeted region and a control area elsewhere in Florida in two ways:

- A series of surveys conducted before and after the media campaign will ask questions about screening.
- In addition, increased attendance in a series of free screenings before and after the campaign in the target and control communities will be assessed.