

Center on Aging

Fall 2020 | musc.edu/aging



03 Despite the “new normal” that we are all trying to navigate, we at the Center on Aging are optimistic about what is to come. We are working on new ways to promote healthy aging for all and looking forward to advancing research and educational opportunities.

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From the Director

Hello everyone,

The year 2020 has brought us many challenges, but has also provided us the opportunity for growth. A major point of growth for us at MUSC is the transition of the MUSC Center on Aging to the MUSC Institute for Healthy Aging (IFHA).

While our designation is changing, our commitment to education, community outreach, research and care for older adults continues. In an effort to grow upon our missions and commitment to seniors, not only in our community, but nationwide, Dr. Hermes Florez was recruited to MUSC to become the director of the IFHA. It is our great honor to have him assume the helm and lead our efforts on improving the health, longevity, and quality of life of seniors. I will transition into Associate Director of the IFHA. A formal introduction to Dr. Florez is found on page 3.

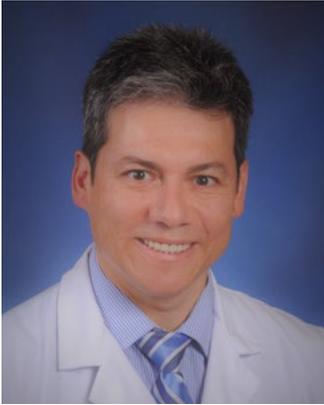
In this edition you can also read about our other exciting aging-related happenings at MUSC, including the development of user-friendly nutrition resources for seniors through the Dietetic Internship Program, the interdisciplinary dementia and stroke research programs led by Dr. Catrina Robinson, and development and implementation of the Rapid Access Memory Program (RAMP). Additionally, there is information on how you can make a difference in the life of someone affected by Alzheimer's disease, as well as how to donate to seniors in need in our community.

In closing, I want to say what an honor and a privilege it has been for me to get to know and work with everyone associated with center. I thank each of you for your commitment and devotion to MUSC and the aging community. I look forward to our continued partnerships as we move forward in our missions and ask that we all remember these words by Helen Keller that "alone we can do so little; together we can do so much!"

Heather Boger, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Interim Director
Center on Aging



MUSC Institute for Healthy Aging



It is with great enthusiasm that I join the faculty at MUSC and the interdisciplinary team of the Center on Aging. Over the last four years, the Center on Aging has worked hard to address the growing needs of the aging population in Charleston and South Carolina. As we work to transition the Center

on Aging to the Institute for Healthy Aging (IFHA), we will continue to work together to fulfill our mission of improving the health, longevity, and quality of life of our seniors.

After twenty-four years of service in the South Florida community, including leading one of the twenty centers of excellence to improve the care of older adults in the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Miami Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC), I am very fortunate to start my tenure of service in Charleston at MUSC and the Ralph H Johnson VA Medical Center.

As we begin the Decade for Healthy Aging (2020-2030), with emerging challenges that are having impact at the

local, state, national, and global community, I embrace the opportunity to build upon the foundational work that the Center on Aging has established on aging-related education, community outreach, research and care for older adults.

As we transition to the IFHA, we will craft together our *Vision for 2020 to Imagine Healthy Aging Communities* in 2030 promoting population health initiatives across the lifespan through innovative research, educational, health-care and community service programs.

We will expand our collaborative efforts with public and private health agencies and institutions, including aging programs at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the State of South Carolina, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). We will enhance participation in the “Healthy Me Healthy SC” initiative as well as coordinate with MUSC leadership for future rural health and prevention efforts.

We encourage you to continue your collaboration, partnership, and join us during this exciting time of transformation to the MUSC Institute for Healthy Aging as we continue to offer opportunities for our students, staff, faculty, and the community at large.



Rapid Access Memory Program: RAMP

A service of the Neuropsychology Division in the Department of Neurology at MUSC

Purpose: The Rapid Access Memory Program (RAMP) was developed to provide efficient neurocognitive diagnostic screening to adult patients over 65 years of age followed by an MUSC Primary Care Physician. Findings and recommendations for treatment or further work-up are quickly relayed to the referring PCP through Epic. In doing so, the RAMP program will reduce wait times for patients seeking formal assessment of memory and other cognitive concerns, and appropriately triage Neurology and other specialty services.

Visit Overview: A RAMP visit begins with a focused clinical interview with the patient to obtain information on the presenting complaint and key background information to provide context. Patients are encouraged to bring a family member or someone else who knows them well to provide additional perspective on memory and related concerns. After the interview, a battery of standardized tests is administered by a neuropsychologist to assess abilities across cognitive domains including attention, processing speed, language, visuospatial abilities, memory, and executive functioning. Scores from testing are referenced to an appropriate peer group to obtain percentile scores. The resulting profile of strengths and weaknesses is interpreted by the neuropsychological with respect to differential diagnosis. Impressions and recommendations are reviewed with the patient (and anyone they wish to include) immediately after.

Patients can expect the visit to last about 120 minutes. After the patient leaves, a brief report is placed into the medical record for the PCP to review. Common recommendations from these visits include:

- Medications for memory
- Addressing mood or anxiety issues that may contribute to subjective concerns

- Referral for Neurology specialty clinics
- Referral for comprehensive neuropsychological evaluation

Test scores are included in the report and can be used as a baseline for comparison to surveil for future declines that would elucidate diagnosis or bear on safety. Note that the RAMP neuropsychologist is operating in a consultative role, and will not supersede the PCP by placing any orders for recommended interventions or further work-up.

Patients: The RAMP program is only appropriate for adults over 65 years of age who are followed by an MUSC Primary Care Physician. When placing a referral for RAMP it is strongly recommended that an order is placed for a brain MRI (CT scan can be used if MRI is contraindicated). Recent laboratory work-up, including B12, liver function, and thyroid are also recommended.

Individuals who will benefit most from a RAMP visit are:

- Medically stable
 - UTI / encephalopathy ruled out
 - No known neurologic disorder with cognitive impairment (refer for full neuropsychological evaluation)
 - No recent major changes in medications that would alter cognition
 - Not actively undergoing procedures that would be expected to temporarily compromise cognition
- Psychiatrically stable
 - No Suicidal/Homicidal ideations
 - No psychosis or active visual/auditory hallucinations (refer for full neuropsychological evaluation)
 - No active alcohol/substance use that would be expected to affect cognitive functioning
- Do not already have established diagnosis of dementia

Talk to your MUSC Primary Care Physician to see if a referral to RAMP might be right for you.



Education: MUSC Dietetic Internship



The Center on Aging is excited to be working with the Dietetic Internship Program and new intern, Mallory Sanford

Under the directorship of **Kelley Martin, MPH, RDN, LD**, the dietetic internship, is designed to prepare students to become a “Registered Dietitian Nutritionist” (RDN). Accredited by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND), upon completion, graduates are eligible to sit for the national RDN exam administered by the Commission on Dietetic Registration (CDR).

Their mission is to improve the health of populations through the preparation of entry-level Registered Dietitian Nutritionists through evidence-based clinical, food management, policy, and public health nutrition experiences for South Carolina and beyond.

Program goals are preparing graduates with knowledge and skills to be competent dietitians and building leadership and public advocacy among the dietetics workforce, particularly in South Carolina.

The **Center on Aging** is participating in this internship for the first time by providing a Capstone Project - a required component of the program. **Mallory Sanford**, the intern we were paired with, will create a series of short videos on

a variety of topics pertinent to seniors - such as eating healthy on a budget, the MIND diet, accessing and cooking fresh produce, caregiver nutrition, etc.

Video links will be sent to partnering agencies and will be informative not only for seniors themselves, but for workers who serve seniors. Additionally, the materials produced will be offered as supplemental information for the MUSC College of Medicine students for deeper understanding of nutrition for seniors as it pertains to their Senior Mentor Program nutrition assignment.

As a “research component”, we plan to develop a survey to assess pre/post knowledge, a patient satisfaction survey, or other data-driven methods to measure success outcomes of this project.

We are excited to begin working on this on-going project with Mallory that will conclude in Spring of 2021. She has a variety of skills and experience that will prove beneficial to this project, as well as an interest in working with seniors in the future.

Mallory’s Background:

- Bachelor of Science in Food and Nutrition from the University of Alabama, Spring 2020
- Bachelor of Arts in Communication & Public Relations from the University of Alabama, 2014
- Taught Cooking Matters classes in Charleston, SC and surrounding areas
- Interned with the American Diabetes Association

For more information about the Dietetic Internship Program, contact Director, Kelley Martin, MPH, RDN, LD at martinkl@muscd.edu.



Research: Catrina Robinson, PhD



Meet CoA Executive Committee Member, Dr. Catrina Robinson of the Neurology Department in the College of Medicine.

The stroke belt is the southeastern region of the United States that has been recognized as having unusually high rates of deaths due to stroke. The Carolinas are regarded as the “buckle” of the stroke belt. Stroke survivors are at an increased risk for cognitive impairment and developing dementia.

Dr. Robinson is a basic scientist whose research connects dementia to stroke. Although dementia and stroke are two separate diseases, they share common risk factors. Dr. Robinson explores the impact of metabolic risk factors such as diabetes, obesity, insulin resistance, and high cholesterol on brain function, or memory and thinking skills.

According to the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC), two out of every three adults in South Carolina are obese. Furthermore, South Carolina is ranked 7th in the nation for diabetes rates in adults. It is highly likely that the presence of these metabolic factors lead to changes in the blood vessels in the brain that is present before stroke and/or the onset of dementia.

Identifying these changes early is the key to delay or even prevent disease progression. Dr. Robinson’s goal is to use these changes as indicators to predict the risk of disease progression and ultimately investigate why these changes occur. This will enable the development of new treatments and provide the best options for patients and their caregivers to cope with these diseases.

The collaborative efforts by basic scientists such as Dr. Robinson and clinical researchers gives provides the advantage to enhance our knowledge of dementia and will lead to great discoveries. This will certainly lead to an advance in the field of treatments, which has been quiet for too long.



I AM STUDY | IMAGING | AGING | MEMORY

WANT TO HELP FIGHT ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE?

Healthy Volunteers Needed for Brain Imaging, Aging, and Memory (I AM) Research Study

The Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) is conducting a brain imaging research study of 300 cognitively healthy men and women who:

- Are in general good health between the ages of 65-85 years with no memory problems or other medical conditions that affect cognition
- Can come to MUSC twice for study visits
- Can return to MUSC in 2 years for a follow up visit
- Can bring a Co-Participant to study visits who you have at least weekly contact with

Compensation will be provided for those who qualify!

Contact Us

For more information:

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Go to: <http://bit.ly/IAMstudy>



This Year's Walk is Everywhere.



The world may look a little different right now, but one thing hasn't changed: our commitment to ending Alzheimer's. This year, Walk to End Alzheimer's® is everywhere — on every sidewalk, track and trail.

Your health and safety are our top priorities. This year's event won't be a large in-person gathering — instead, we invite you to walk in small teams of friends and family while others in your community do the same. Because we are all still walking and fundraising for the same thing: a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia.

Want to help? Join or donate to the MUSC Center on Aging Team or start your own!

Saturday, November 7, 2020

9:45 am Watch the Opening and Promise Garden Ceremony on Mainstage app

10:00 am Walk in your neighborhood

10:00 am - 3:00 pm Experience the view-only planted Promise Garden (location TBD)

MUSC Center on Aging Emergency Senior Supply Drive

Help local seniors get the food and supplies they need during this COVID-19 outbreak.

Please donate at:
www.tridentaaa.org/donate





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MUSC Center on Aging
musc.edu/aging

THE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Founded in 1824 in Charleston, The Medical University of South Carolina is the oldest medical school in the South. Today, MUSC continues the tradition of excellence in education, research, and patient care. MUSC educates and trains more than 3,000 students and residents, and has nearly 13,000 employees, including approximately 1,500 faculty members.

The Center on Aging is a research, service, and education center at the Medical University of South Carolina. The center was approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education December 3, 1987, giving it the status of the oldest research center at the University.

Under the leadership of Interim Director, Dr. Heather Boger, the Center on Aging is committed promoting health, longevity and improving the quality of life for South Carolina's seniors.