



African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network

Envisioning healthy weight, freedom from obesity-related health problems and high quality of life for African American youth, adults and elders.

Purpose & Origins

Founded in 2002, the African American Collaborative Obesity Research Network (AACORN) brings together a diverse group of academic scholars, emerging scholars, and community research partners to develop innovative, multidimensional methods for promoting achievement of healthy weight. Dr. Shiriki Kumanyika, an African American public health and nutrition researcher, is AACORN's founder and chair. AACORN's national office is now situated within the Department of Community Health & Prevention at Drexel University's Dornsife School of Public Health. We support greater participation in framing and implementing healthy weight and obesity research by scholars and partners with obesity-related scientific expertise *and* socio-cultural grounding in Black American life experiences.

Rationale & Niche

AACORN's mission is to improve the quality, quantity, and effective translation of research to address weight related issues in Black American communities.

Despite the fact that Black Americans have high rates of obesity, there is a lack of sufficient research to identify causes and effective interventions specific to Black American communities. AACORN provides a collaborative environment for building and applying the evidence base as well as a critical mass of scholars and research partners to advocate for more attention to research on issues related to Black American health.

AACORN is committed to conducting research projects that the Network is uniquely qualified to execute. The Network serves as a catalyst and stimulus for the field by enhancing the likelihood of effecting permanent solutions for obesity and obesity-related health problems in Black American communities.

Our Approach

In 2007, AACORN published an expanded obesity paradigm¹ that calls for a broader interdisciplinary and context sensitive approach to designing interventions on eating, physical activity, and weight, with particular reference to Black Americans. The paradigm suggests that weight-control interventions must be informed by a broader knowledge base about life in Black communities and framed more holistically to consider other relevant social and health priorities and adaptations to adverse life circumstances.

AACORN's expanded obesity paradigm will evolve to reflect an ongoing synthesis of the Network's thinking about what is needed to improve the quality of research to address weight issues in Black communities. The community-centered version is a tool for engaging directly with community members on these issues.

¹Kumanyika SK, et al, Expanding the obesity research paradigm to reach African American communities. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2007; 4 http://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2007/oct/07_0067.htm

Expertise & Interests

AACORN members have interests and expertise that cover a wide spectrum of content and methodological areas relevant to research ways to support healthy eating, physical activity, and weight control in Black adults, children and teens. The Network's National Office at Drexel coordinates or provides AACORN's outreach, research, national workshops, and educational and technical assistance activities.

Network Involvement

Involvement with AACORN is open to all interested and qualified individuals. Membership is by invitation only. Membership is not restricted by "race" or ethnicity.

AACORN is expanding its focus and will be developing interdisciplinary working groups around central themes of inquiry as well as interorganizational partnerships. Together, AACORN's members, working groups and partners will engage in research collaborations and dissemination activities, including equity-focused whole-community approaches to advancing the health of Black communities. For more information about AACORN, please visit our website.

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