

Health Equity for African American Women

A COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH INITIATIVE



Abiola O. Keller, PhD, MPH, PA-C
Assistant Professor
Marquette University
College of Nursing

During Minority Health Month, we salute those professionals who dedicate their efforts to overcoming disparities in underserved communities. Abiola Keller is an assistant professor in the College of Nursing at Marquette University. “I teach with a focus on health equity,” Keller said. “It’s important my students understand the broader picture of health, in terms of social determinates and how that impacts health and health care.”

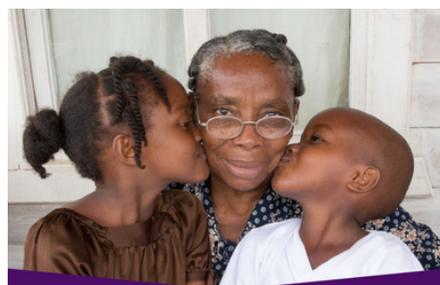
Health Equity for African American Women

Keller’s research focuses on advancing health in minority communities. “I’m looking at how to protect and promote the health of African American women,” Keller said. “Specifically, we know that women are the predominant caregivers if a family member falls ill. So, by default caregiving is a women’s health issue.”

Better Awareness

“There seems to be a disconnect between the people who need resources and them getting connected to resources available, Keller said. “Several organizations saw this need and we have worked together to create a Caring for the Caregiver event every November to help to overcome this disconnect. This initiative brings together organizations who all have a mission to better support caregivers and strives to connect African American women caregivers to resources and each other.”

In her research, Keller works in collaboration with community partners with an emphasis on awareness and access to health and resources for African American women. “By working with local organizations, who have programs in place, we are trying to create better access to services. If caregivers are aware of resources and we understand and address barriers to access, that should translate to higher usage with ultimately, better health outcomes” Keller said.



In the United States, **MORE THAN 10 MILLION WOMEN** are either living with Alzheimer’s or caring for someone who has it.

“A significant barrier to self-care for caregivers is time,” Keller said. “Often women are not only caring for an older adult, but also a child. Many are still working, and their income supports the whole family. You can see why self-care may fall to the bottom of the list. I really want to change the lens in which we see caregivers. They are not just an extension of the person they care for, but they are a person and their health and well-being are important. We also need to adjust the narrative to caregivers, emphasizing why they need to prioritize their own health. If they fall ill, there may be no one to pick up their caregiving duties. And for the healthcare system side, if caregivers aren’t taking care of themselves, they run the risk of becoming the next recipient.”

African American’s are two times more likely than whites to have Alzheimer’s disease, and over 60% of Alzheimer’s and dementia caregivers are women. The Alzheimer’s Association is proud to collaborate with Keller to help reach underserved communities.