

medical regimens, new coping mechanisms, stress reduction strategies, and pain and/or disease management techniques.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff at the Community Health Center conducted telehealth visits with patients to ensure they were protecting themselves and staying healthy. Primary care and behavioral telehealth services include routine sick and health maintenance follow-up care and management of chronic illnesses like hypertension, diabetes, asthma, depression, anxiety and arthritis, as well as diabetes patient and family education. Patients with chronic illnesses were contacted to determine if they have a need for medications, food, and information to educate them about COVID-19. Telehealth services are available in English, Spanish and Creole.

To address the needs of the community, Drs. Karethy Edwards and Karen Chambers spearheaded a program to provide lifesaving PPE and health care services for residents near the Community Health Center at UB Kinsey location. In coordination with College of Nursing faculty and staff, they provided 2,000 masks to homeless individuals or those economically impoverished in the area.

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ALMOST ONE QUARTER OF THE POPULATION IN
THIS COMMUNITY IS UNINSURED AND OFTEN
SEEKS CARE IN EMERGENCY ROOMS BECAUSE
THEY DO NOT HAVE AN ALTERNATIVE.

Dr. Karethy Edwards
Associate Dean for Academic Programs

RESPONDING TO THE CALL TO CARE THROUGH DEMENTIA SPECIALIZED SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

The Louis and Anne Green Memory and Wellness Center has always demonstrated excellence through practice by providing caring-based dementia specialized care and supportive services to manage the pandemic of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD). The ADRD pandemic has now been compounded with the onset of another global pandemic, COVID-19, which exacerbates social isolation already experienced by those with ADRD and their family caregivers. The ADRD-COVID cluster has generated elevated levels of loneliness and social isolation, which in turn produce physical, cognitive, and mental-health-related repercussions.

Studies show that Hispanic/Latino and Haitian-Caribbean populations are particularly and disproportionately affected by both dementia and COVID-19, thereby contributing to exponential risk for ADRD-COVID loneliness.

Responding to the call to care, the MWC developed a hybrid model of evidence-based care and supportive services in response to COVID-19. Staff at the Center refined virtual service delivery through telehealth and video chat platforms. Virtual support groups focus attention on the needs of individuals who speak a range of languages, including Spanish and Creole, providing linguistically appropriate and culturally competent messages of hope, optimism, social connection, support, and specialized care during a very lonely and isolating time.

The MWC has several programs and services:

Memory Café-inspired Activities (MCAs) providing psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic modalities have been conducted in tandem with faith-based organizations serving the Hispanic/Latino and Haitian Creole-speaking communities. This program educates the Spanish-speaking community about a variety of topics, including the different types of dementia, associated behavioral and psychological symptoms, methods to communicate with and promote safety for someone affected by dementia, and techniques to address stress and heighten socialization. Given the physical distancing requirements of the COVID-19 pandemic, MCA has been expanded to a weekly virtual Spanish-speaking support group.

For the Haitian community, a teleconference Haitian Creole-speaking support group was created for participants of a faith-based community in Delray Beach, Fla. It provides vital mental health services due to social isolation and addresses the lack of linguistically and culturally appropriate information and supportive care. This program, titled **“Connecting Creole-Speaking Haitian Older Adults Through Telephonic Engagement,”** consists of biweekly groups held hourly on Mondays and Thursdays.

The MWC is also offering a new **virtual Day Center** program, which includes virtual activities three days a week with specialized programs participants will enjoy and benefit from, such as chair exercises, visual presentations, word games, trivia and more. Center staff remain connected and continue to offer programming, guidance and assistance to those living with ADRD and their devoted family caregivers during these challenging times.

For caregivers, the MWC hosts a virtual **Self-Preservation Activities (SPA)** program to help inform caregivers about a variety of issues and resources associated with caring for someone with a memory disorder. The goal is to provide core educational topics to prepare caregivers for the future, as well as assist them in coping with their daily caregiving challenges, especially during COVID-19. ■