

March 2020

## Message from the Director Mark Holmes, PhD



Welcome to the latest issue of the Sheps Center's e-newsletter. This new tool will help us keep you updated on the latest

developments at the Center and in health policy. Our work is interdisciplinary and focuses on the intersection of policy, research and practice to improve our health system. In FY 18-19, the Sheps Center supported 158 staff and faculty members and had nearly \$16 million in research funding.

In this issue, learn more about the awards recently earned by Erin Fraher, PhD, MPP, director of the Program for Health Workforce Research and Policy, a new study on patient priorities care, ways you can support the Sheps Center and a project helping to combat the opioid epidemic.

## Fraher Notches Awards

Erin Fraher, PhD, MPP, director of the Program for Health Workforce Research and Policy at the Sheps Center, recently received two prestigious recognitions.

Fraher received the Award for Excellence in Health Policy Leadership from the North Carolina Institute of Medicine. She also recently won the Data Visualization challenge at the International Health Workforce Collaborative's (IHCW) Data Olympics for 2019.

## Funding News



Crystal Wiley Cené, MD, MPH, FAHA, has received funding from the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) for her proposal to study care for older North Carolinians with multiple chronic conditions. Cené is the Director of the Program on Health Disparities at the Sheps Center.

The five-year study will consider the implementation and effectiveness of "patient priorities care," which seeks to align decision-making and care with patients' health priorities, in North Carolina primary care practices. This strategy is an ongoing process that has been shown to be effective at reducing perceived treatment burden, unwanted medications, and outpatient care.

[Read more](#)



## Helping Medical Providers Combat Opioid Addiction

Medication assisted treatment (MAT) integrates behavioral health and social services interventions with treatment using FDA-approved medication for opioid use disorder, like methadone or buprenorphine. Patients receiving medications as part of their opioid addiction treatment are 75% less likely to die because of their addiction than those not receiving medications.



UNC ECHO for MAT is a project at the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research focused on understanding the barriers healthcare networks and medical providers face when deciding whether to offer MAT in their practices. The team evaluates strategies to address those obstacles and provides education and support for practices to expand access to MAT in North Carolina.

UNC ECHO provides:

- Case-based learning via video conferencing via live, web-based sessions. Participants and clinical experts will discuss real cases and share knowledge, experience, and recommendations. A didactic presented by a member of the clinical team will also be shared during the session.
- One-on-one consultations with addiction medicine experts.
- Support from practice coaches who provide support and education for office staff which can include developing workflows, practice policies, and education for staff.

The UNC ECHO effort has expanded to all 100 North Carolina counties and includes partnerships with other agencies and groups that are developing additional ECHO clinics.

UNC ECHO for MAT is supported by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NC DHHS)/Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

[READ MORE](#)

## Research News

### Improving Quality of Life for Older North Carolinians

Co-Director of the Program on Aging, Disability, and Long-Term Care Sheryl Zimmerman, PhD, is leading a study to find new practices to improve quality of life for residents in assisted living facilities. As many as 97% of people with Alzheimer's disease or related dementias experience at least one behavioral or psychological symptom, the most common being apathy, depression, irritability, agitation, and anxiety.



The use of antipsychotic medications to treat these symptoms is now strongly discouraged. In response, this project will develop and evaluate standardized protocols for two evidence-based non-pharmacologic practices to address behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia that are likely to be feasible for use by and acceptable to assisted living providers.

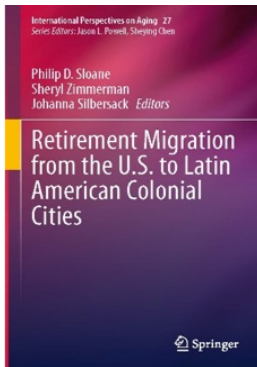


## Support the Sheps Center

Give UNC is coming on March 31, 2020. You can [support the Sheps Center online](#). Stay tuned for challenges and other information!

[Learn more.](#)

## Publication News



A newly published [book](#) by UNC faculty, entitled “Retirement Migration from the U.S. to Latin American Colonial Cities”, explores the trend of retirees to relocate internationally to southerly destinations. To date, most research on this phenomenon has focused on retirees’ themselves; in contrast, this book describes the results of a study funded by the National Geographic Society aimed at addressing retiree impact on the economy, environment, and social relationships of two major destination communities: San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and Cuenca, Ecuador.

The book, edited by Philip Sloane, MD, MPH, Sheryl Zimmerman, MSW, PhD, and Johanna Silbersack, MSW, offers a range of recommendations for communities looking to either mitigate or attract the new wave of retiree migration.

## Upcoming Events

### Interdisciplinary Seminar Series in Health Equity

- Tuesday, April 7 from 2:00pm to 3:00pm - Health Sciences Library Room 328  
*Speakers: Diane Berry, PhD, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN and Lori Carter-Edwards, PhD (dissemination, outreach, and community engagement in health disparities)*

### UNC Rural Health Research Seminar Series

- Tuesday, March 24 at 3:00pm - 215 Health Sciences Library ( [Click for more information and registration](#))

### Triangle Health Economics Workshops

- [Click for schedule and information](#)

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[North Carolina Network Consortium](#)  
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