



# Resound))))))

Summer 2012

Newsletter of the National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing

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September 1, 2011 - August 31, 2012

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## NBASLH Members Attended Health Disparities Conference at Alabama State University



Robert Mayo, Regina Lemmon, Tina T. Smith, Wilhelmina Wright-Harp, Carine Myers-Jennings, Mary Langford-Hall, Carol Cannon, Angela Miles and Elgustus Polite

various disciplines including communication sciences and disorders, rehabilitation counseling, physical therapy, occupational therapy, physician assistants, medical doctors, curriculum education, public health, prosthetics and orthotics. The conference was supported by a grant from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) which was awarded to ASU's Center to Advance Rehabilitative Health and Education. The Center works to address the rehabilitative health needs of all individuals, with a special focus on African Americans and other minority populations, across five key domains: clinical, community-based services, educational services, policy reform and research.

Several members of the National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing (NBASLH) were invited to attend the conference. These NBASLH members were representatives from communication sciences and disorders programs at six Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and two majority-serving institutions and personnel representing NBASLH. The NBASLH members and their respective universities included: Howard University (Silvia Martinez, Joan C. Payne and Wilhelmina Wright-Harp), Jackson State University (Carol L. Cannon and Mary Langford Hall), South Carolina State University (Regina Lemmon), Tennessee State University (Tina T. Smith), University of the District of Columbia (Angela M. Miles and Elgustus J. Polite), NBASLH/University of North Carolina at Greensboro (Robert Mayo), and Valdosta State University (Corine Myers-Jennings).

The dialogue centered on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status and other determinants of health, cultural bias, representation in health professions, access to rehabilitation health care and cultural competence. The conference began with opening remarks from Dr. Steven Chesbro, Dean of the College of Health Sciences, who was the facilitator for the occasion. Dr. Chesbro unveiled the inaugural Baines-Woodruff Endowed Lectureship in Health Disparities

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## Health Disparities Conference

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which was presented during the conference. The keynote address for this inaugural event was delivered by Louis W. Sullivan, MD. Dr. Sullivan was formerly the dean and founding director of the Morehouse School of Medicine (1978) and Secretary of the US Department of Health and Human Services (1989–1993). He is currently President Emeritus of Morehouse and serves as chair of the Sullivan Alliance which works to diversify the health professions workforce. Dr. Sullivan shared the *Journey of Americans to Achieve Health Equity* with the audience of approximately 300.

Dr. Sullivan's lecture set the stage for the pertinent discussions that occurred throughout the weekend. These discussions occurred with the entire group, in discipline-specific teams (i.e., communication sciences and disorders) as well as with smaller multidisciplinary groups that reflected specific rehabilitation areas. During the discipline-specific discussions, each team was charged with the task of determining their research needs for health disparities. Speech-language pathologists identified the health disparities that affect minority populations with communication disorders. The group noted there is a lack of prevalence/incidence data for various disabilities, which include autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injury, aphasia, motor speech disorders and dysphagia. Specifically, there is also a lack of data on the number of African American and Hispanics with these disorders. Secondly, cultural correlates/dynamics and cultural competence is another area of health disparity. That is, there is a lack of culturally-appropriate test materials or at least instruments that have been validated for a variety of cultural groups if minorities were not represented in the creation of the assessment and procedures for various disorders. Additionally, cross-generational and generational training needs to occur at the university level. Culturally appropriate diets are an issue for individuals with dysphagia concerns. The SLP team reported that African American and Hispanic patients may not be compliant

with diet restrictions (i.e., mechanical soft and puree diets) because they are not appealing. Dr. Wilhelmina Wright-Harp stated that, "African Americans may prefer sweet potatoes as opposed to mashed potatoes while Hispanic Americans may prefer plantains." Thirdly, the World Health Organization (WHO) model may not be appropriate to diagnosis and treat culturally and linguistically different populations. Fourth, health literacy was deemed an issue because low literacy rates affect readability of materials distributed to clients. Low literacy and language differences may also affect an individual's ability to understand health information in either oral or written form. The fifth disparity identified was the lack of interdisciplinary research connecting to allied health professionals.

The large group discussion identified and reviewed several health disparities including: cultural competence, inter-professional approaches, cultural considerations in health (cardiovascular diseases, metabolic syndrome and acquired brain injuries, etc.), representation of minorities in the rehabilitation professions (personnel shortages, mentorship, outreach/preparation), quality of care (intervention programming, culturally-appropriate tools, medical care funding, discharge planning and prevention), and health literacy (technology options/ integration, strategies, access to information, public relations [grade level of communication, content, trust issues/cultural competence]).

The conference concluded with a cross-discipline discussion on the above topics in a small group setting. From these discussions, health care professionals began the process of generating research projects. The research projects will be conducted across disciplines using both qualitative and quantitative data across networks. The collaborations will continue using synchronous communication during research. Dr. Chesbro ended the conference by challenging each participant to maintain the connections and continue the research to address health disparities among African Americans and other minorities.

## An Opinion on Specialization

Lately, there has been a lot of discussion about specialization in the field of Communication Disorders. While I definitely believe there are benefits to specializing in a certain area, I also think the value of the generalist has decreased. More importantly, I think the value and opinion of the Masters level clinician has changed. Most graduate programs are fiercely competitive and allow graduate clinicians to have a wide variety of experiences with different populations and settings. Upon completion, graduates go into their Clinical Fellowship Year choosing a setting that works best for them. What works best may depend on a number of factors including setting, population, salary and sometimes it is simply based on the first job offer they receive. Fortunately, it seems less challenging to change settings or populations early in your career, but unfortunately the longer you stay with a particular population or setting the harder it is to transition. I think this is unfortunate because one of the benefits of choosing a career in Communication Disorders is the flexibility it is supposed to afford. Also, to complete a Masters level program the graduate must have demonstrated a high level of intelligence, the ability

to be resourceful, learn information quickly and maintain professionalism in all environments. Therefore, transitioning in the field should not be as difficult as it has become recently. Given the right mentorship, any clinician with the desire and work ethic, should be able to succeed in any setting. In addition, after working in a variety of settings, many clinicians may find their niche and choose to specialize or pursue a PhD in a particular area of study.

While some may argue that other professions, such as the medical profession offer specializations, there is a far greater number of physicians and surgeons compared to the number of speech-language pathologists (SLP). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook website, in 2010 there were 691,000 physicians and surgeons compared to 123,200 SLPs. With the changing population and shortage of SLPs, specialization expectations may significantly narrow the applicant pool for jobs and decrease services for individuals with communication disorders. Populations that receive services for communication and swallowing disorders are constantly evolving. War, aging populations, advances in medical technology that

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## Why NBASLH??

In a field dominated by women and with an increasing need for diversity, it is important that African-American men who enter the field have the support and mentorship they need for success. Meet three Men of NBASLH who definitely answer the question, "Why NBASLH?" These men have all been influenced, nurtured and supported by NBASLH. In turn, they have each made amazing contributions to the field of communications disorders.



### Byron Ross, PhD

Byron Ross is a clinical assistant professor at the University of Houston in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders. His current clinical interests are in investigating best practices for social skills interventions with adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorders. His research interests include investigating the use and understanding of nonverbal behaviors by children and adults with autism spectrum disorders. Byron completed his doctoral training in Communication Sciences and Disorders at The University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Lincoln, Nebraska). He received his Master's and Baccalaureate degrees in speech-language pathology from The University of Central Arkansas (Conway, Arkansas). Byron also holds a Certificate of Clinical Competence as a speech-language pathologist with the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and state licensures in Texas and Arkansas. Contact him at [blross@central.uh.edu](mailto:blross@central.uh.edu).



### Jason A. Simon

Jason A. Simon is a licensed and certified speech-language pathologist in the state of New York and serving in the borough of Queens. He is in his second year of practice as an early intervention contractor. He received his BA in speech pathology from Brooklyn College, CUNY in 2007. Upon graduation he moved abroad to the UK teaching (English/History/Art). When he returned home to the US he became a high school dropout advocate. He describes these work experiences as reinforcing to his desire for community service. Jason gained his Master's Degree at the University of Connecticut in 2010, and obtained his Certificate of Clinical Competence in 2011. He primarily provides home-based speech and language services in South-Side Jamaica Queen's and its surrounding areas. It was important that children in urban areas be able to familiarize with educators that shared similar cultural experiences as themselves. Jason provides speech-language services that include the areas of articulation, dysphagia, language comprehension, oral expression and pervasive developmental disorders. He also works on clients' Individual Education Plans setting challenging but realistic goals. His work allows him to collaborate with Behavioral/Occupational/Physical Therapist and parents to help increase achievement in clients communication skills.



### Frederick L. Turner

The founder and CEO of Turner's Diagnostics PLLC, Frederick is committed to providing evidenced based intervention that is patient centered and family inclusive. He received his bachelors of arts degree from Howard University in 2006 with a concentration in Legal Communications. He later studied at North Carolina Central University (NCCU) where he completed his Masters of Education in Communication Disorders with a concentration in speech-language pathology. Frederick is a nationally certified speech-language pathologist by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. He is also a member and former student representative of The National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing.

Frederick has worked for The University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) Center's of Rehab Services Outpatient Clinic, Skilled Nursing facilities, and is currently the lead speech-language pathologist for the voice laboratory at Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills, Michigan. Frederick's experience extends across the lifespan working with children with speech, language and literacy disorders to adult swallowing, post concussive/traumatic brain injuries, stroke and voice disorders. Contact him at [turnersdiagnostics@gmail.com](mailto:turnersdiagnostics@gmail.com).

## An Opinion on Specialization (continued from page 2)

preserve life longer and decreased infant mortality rates will lead to a greater increase in the need for qualified SLPs. It is important that the life span SLP or the generalist feels as supported and valued as the clinician who chooses to specialize. I support respecting the generalist and the specialist, most importantly I support respecting hard working clinicians. What are your thoughts? Do you think the field should move more towards specialization? For those who do wish to specialize, the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association offers a Clinical Specialty Recognition certification. Visit <http://www.asha.org/certification/specialty/> for more information.



*Jamila Perry Foreman, M.Ed CCC-SLP is a licensed SLP who resides and practices in Charlotte, NC and Editor of Resound. Contact her at [jamilatheslp@gmail.com](mailto:jamilatheslp@gmail.com)*

### Do you have news to share?

Members are encouraged to submit items for consideration and publication in the **Resound**!!!!. Topics include articles of interest to the membership and areas that pertain to SLPs or audiologists.

Share your good news and accomplishments!

If you have a story, announcement or event you would like to place in the **Resound**!!!!, please send your information to:

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NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL BLACK ASSOCIATION FOR  
SPEECH-LANGUAGE AND HEARING  
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## Convention Happenings



At the 2012 Convention Ms. Cathy Runnels presented Dialectical Variations in Standardized Testing. At the end of the presentation Cathy conducted a drawing for an OWLS-2 Test. Featured in the photo is Cathy and Diane Odell, SLP from Chicago Public Schools, the winner of the drawing. Ms. Runnels is an SLP in private practice in the Washington, DC metroplex and is a former chair of NBASLH.



Ashley Jones, Jonathan Green, Ebony Glover, Vanessa Stevenson, Regina Lemmon



Kyomi Gregory, Regina Lemmon, Jessica S. Richardson



Ashley Jones and Vanessa Stevenson at the Student Luncheon

## Membership News

**Dr. Valarie B. Fleming** was recently selected for the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Program. The purpose of the program is to benefit junior faculty who are actively involved in biomedical-behavioral research and interested in major grant support for their research. Ms. Fleming stated, "This is a very exciting opportunity and honor to be selected. As a member of NBASLH, I hope to share my experience as a presenter at a convention in the future."

**Dr. Rachel Williams** was recently honored with the 2011 Outstanding Alumni Award for the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at the University of Central Florida. Associate Professor Linda Rosa-Lugo who coordinates the program stated "Rachel was one of those students you know was going to get involved in the profession. She was passionate and full of curiosity and had a wonderful sense of humor. We are very proud of her."



Rachel Williams and Tom Mullin