TWU’s Woo aims to improve reproductive care for Black women

Texas ranks among the nation’s worst states for women’s reproductive care, but Texas Woman’s University faculty researcher Jennifer Woo, PhD, CNM/WHNP, is working to improve it. She has launched a research project to better understand the complex contributors for preterm birth, a significant factor in infant mortality.

Woo, an assistant professor in the College of Nursing at the Dallas campus, was awarded a $393,000 training grant in May 2022 from the National Institute of Minority Health Disparities (NIMHD). The NIH K23 (1K23MD016431-01A1) mentored career development award is one of the institute’s most coveted. The grant provides 75% salary release time for Woo to focus on researching preterm births in Black women for three years.

Black women in the United States are more than 1.5 times at greater risk for experiencing preterm birth than their non-Hispanic white counterparts, Woo noted, and 40% percent of neonatal deaths are due to preterm birth. Black infants die at a rate two and half times greater than that of non-Hispanic White infants.

Babies born preterm often have immature lungs and organs, which make them vulnerable to infections. Additionally, preterm babies are at increased risk for developmental delays.

Although there are several factors that contribute to preterm birth, Woo’s research is focused on understanding the psychosocial factors – such as depressive symptoms and exposure to racial discrimination – and on nutrient deficiencies and how they contribute to predicting preterm birth risk.

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Ilana Morgan, PhD and associate professor in the Texas Woman’s University division of dance, is providing the means for students to empower themselves on a whole other level. These are justice-involved youth.

In 2017, Morgan began the dance class on her own as outreach and research, working with girls ages 15-17 in a Denton County post-adjudication program called Courage to Change. The program takes place in a gym that is part of the Denton ISD Sparks campus, which operates as part of the Denton County Juvenile Detention Center.

Some youthful offenders, after going before a judge, enter the program, which is a six- to 12-month residential program housed near the jail and detention center on Woodrow Lane, south of McKinney Avenue in east Denton. The girls’ delinquent conduct ranges from assault to theft to drug- and alcohol-related offenses. The group meets once a week.

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RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Ngozi Mbue
Nursing – Houston

Dr. Ngozi Mbue represented TWU at the 2023 TEES Annual Research Conference at Texas A&M in May. As part of a multi-institutional group with researchers from Sam Houston State University, Lamar University, A&M Commerce, and Prairie View A&M, she and her team were granted $5,000.00 for their research project: “IMPACT: Intelligent Management of Pain Through Algorithm Control Therapy.”
Chancellor's Student Research Scholars 2023

- Stockemer, Jennifer: Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling
- Miller, Kenneth L: Physical Therapy – Dallas
- Cuervo, Margarita B: Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling
- Rumpa, Mafia Mahabub: Sciences - Biology
- Cantu, Daisy J: Sciences - Biology
- Hickman, Taylor M: Sciences - Biology
- Parker, Salena P: Language, Culture, and Gender Studies
- Pryor, Jaida: Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling
- Davenport, Anne: Sciences - Biology
- Campen, Catherine E: Sciences - Biology
- Ahanotu, Adaeze N: Sciences - Biology
- Stoddard, Carissa A: Physical Therapy – Dallas
- Kouadio, Halima O: Sciences - Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Speir, Kinley: Nursing – Dallas
- Sabir, Abdullah As: Sciences - Biology

For more information about student research: Click Here