Massey doctoral student receives NCI funding to examine racial disparities in follow-up care among breast cancer survivors

Massey doctoral student Megan Edmonds, M.P.H., received competitive peer-reviewed funding from the National Cancer Institute Geographic Management of Cancer Disparities Program for her dissertation study titled “Y-WE Survive Breast Cancer.” Edmonds is a member of the community outreach and engagement team in the Office of Health Equity and Disparities Research (OHEDR) at VCU Massey Cancer Center and a doctoral student in the Department of Health Behavior and Policy at the VCU School of Medicine.

This study will examine racial disparities among breast cancer survivors' follow-up care, with special attention to surveillance mammography. Edmonds’ research will employ novel mixed-method approaches, including virtual focus groups on breast cancer online platforms such as breastcancer.org to engage with survivors and a Qualtrics online survey to recruit a cohort of Black and white survivors. The study aims to help fill scientific gaps of knowledge pertaining to Black women's adherence to surveillance mammography and reveal modifiable factors to improve follow-up care delivery for Black survivors.

Findings from this study will also aid in the development of evidence-based communications strategies on follow-up care that will utilize emerging health technologies and social media.

“This research study will equip me with skill sets and the knowledge base to facilitate my long-term career goal as an independent health equity researcher in cancer prevention and control, with a focus in breast cancer survivorship,” Edmonds said.

The community outreach and engagement team in the OHEDR doesn’t just connect with established researchers but works to support future investigators via connection to community stakeholders and assistance with recruitment. The OHEDR has been a critical part of this study, helping to facilitate outreach into the community via connection with advocates and help with recruitment, and the OHEDR team is proud of Edmonds' work.

Edmonds is a predoctoral mentee of Vanessa Sheppard, Ph.D., associate director for disparities research, co-leader of the Cancer Prevention and Control research program and Theresa A. Thomas Memorial Foundation Chair in Cancer Prevention and Control at Massey as well as professor and chair of the VCU Department of Health Behavior and Policy.