

UsAgainstAlzheimer's Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship: Empowering Nurses to Become Community Leaders and Brain Health Ambassadors

The Healthy Brain Resource Center Stories From the Field highlight the achievements of award recipients from the National Healthy Brain Initiative and the BOLD Infrastructure for Alzheimer's Act. Healthy Brain Road Map domains that are relevant to this story are denoted by the icons in the top right of this document.

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

Inequities in brain health and Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) persist among Black and Latino adults.¹ Recognizing nurses as the most trusted healthcare professionals, UsAgainstAlzheimer's established the Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship in 2022 to address the significant gap in brain health knowledge among Black and Latino adults.

Over 9 months, fellows receive:

- Virtual training.
- Opportunities to get continuing education credits from the UsAgainstAlzheimer's Brain Health Academy.
- Mentorship.
- Access to a network of experts to prepare them for two required community conversations, one with peers and one with community members.

APPROACH

PROCESS

- Completed a landscape analysis and conducted focus groups** with Black and Latino community members and nurses, revealing that Black and Latino people are more disconnected from the healthcare system than their White counterparts, nurses are the most trusted healthcare professionals, and nurses do not have access to brain health continuing education. These findings drove the development of the fellowship.
- Partnered with two national nursing associations** serving Black and Latino nurses to tailor the fellowship to meet the needs of their membership, using tailored outreach, promotion, and recruitment. Both associations are involved in initial application reviews.
- Developed and applied broad fellowship eligibility criteria** to select members of the nursing associations, aiming for nurses who are comfortable using virtual platforms and social media, represent a diverse range of experiences and geographic locations, and have community connections.
- Designed each cohort's unique fellowship experience**, including five brain health promotion workshops led by subject matter experts (SMEs), including a leadership course on community engagement; networking opportunities with alumni; other exclusive fellow events (e.g., SME presentations on intersectional identities, Latino caregivers, and clinical trial diversity); and access to free brain health resources.
- Developed community conversation materials for nurse fellows**, such as registration forms, template presentations, and evaluation forms, in both English and Spanish. Conversations focus on modifiable risk factors and practical prevention strategies and are tailored for Black and Latino populations.
- Compensated fellows with a \$2,000 stipend** for their time and effort.
- Maintained regular communication with fellows** through informal office hours and bi-monthly emails with updated resources.
- Evaluated the fellowship** by measuring community conversation participants' knowledge gains from pre- and post-tests and collecting feedback about the fellowship from fellows during exit evaluations and an external advisory group's yearly reviews.
- Used insights from evaluation and feedback activities to enhance the fellowship**, such as adding nurse alumni as mentors and conducting more knowledge workshops.

PARTNERS

- National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN)
- National Black Nurses Association, Inc. (NBNA)

PROGRESS 2022-2024

3

Nine-month cohorts completed

33

Nurse fellows from 13 states and DC

4

Alumni mentors

1,150

Peers and community members trained across 13 states and DC

98%

Trained peers feel comfortable sharing information learned with patients (Cohort 1)

85%

Community conversation participants showed increased knowledge of ADRD risk reduction through lifestyle changes (Cohort 2)

1

Poster presentation at the Latinos and Alzheimer's Symposium

3

Alumni funded to attend the 2023 Gerontological Society of America annual meeting

¹Alzheimer's Association and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2023). Healthy Brain Initiative: State and Local Road Map for Public Health, 2023–2027. Chicago, IL: Alzheimer's Association. https://www.alz.org/media/Documents/Healthy_Brain_Initiative_Road_Map_2023_2027.pdf

LESSONS LEARNED



Tailoring the community conversation materials to the needs of the intended audiences has been essential to its success. The anticipated reading levels, primary languages, and preferred methods for learning and receiving information were considered and addressed when developing the program to help reflect cultural values and ensure its relevance.

"It's a national fellowship program, but it has to be locally tailored. We provide the fellows with template presentations but it's up to them to really tailor it knowing their community and knowing what's on the ground."

Program Director, Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship, UsAgainstAlzheimer's



Collaboration among fellows and other entities broadened the program's reach. The fellowship has fostered valuable partnerships within and outside of the program. For example, a fellow from North Carolina co-presented to her peers with one of the fellows from Florida. UsAgainstAlzheimer's connected an alumni professor in Charlotte with a CDC contact to organize a summit for Black caregivers in North Carolina, which 200 people attended.

"The fellowship opened up many opportunities for me to learn more about Alzheimer's and to connect with subject matter experts. The fellowship allowed me to attend the Gerontological Society of America annual meeting, where I networked with cutting edge researchers, and gave me opportunities for professional growth as a researcher and community educator."

Cohort #2 Fellow/Cohort #3 Alumni Mentor

from NBNA, who serve as mentors to guide new fellows. Alumni interested in serving as mentors complete an application. Once accepted, they receive a \$1,000 stipend and are required to lead at least one community conversation.

"I think making space for story telling is very important. Black and Latino communities are story telling cultures. Nothing that we say is going to be quick. On top of that, Alzheimer's is an incredibly emotional disease. So, many of our 1 hour sessions in year 1 became 90 minute sessions in year 2 because we knew we had to give space for people to share their stories."

Program Director, Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship, UsAgainstAlzheimer's



Providing adaptable resources ensured that fellows were equipped to tailor their efforts to their unique community contexts. The program provides evidence-based template presentations (in English and Spanish) and CDC resources, which fellows can tailor to their local communities as long as they are properly cited and sourced to ensure the information remains evidence-based and accurate.

"These two people have never met, and together they came up and did an all day caregiver summit. And that would've never happened if CDC hadn't reached out to me. That would've never happened if she weren't a fellow. So it's been really wonderful and gratifying to see how the fellows are able to extend their reach beyond the fellowship."

Program Director, Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship, UsAgainstAlzheimer's



Creation of an alumni program helped previous fellows stay engaged and provided valuable mentorship opportunities for new fellows. After the second fellowship, alumni expressed a strong desire to stay involved, leading to the creation of an alumni program. Key benefits of this program for alumni include networking opportunities, scholarship opportunities, access to SMEs, and regular sharing of evidence-based information. In addition, each fellowship class has two alumni, one from NAHN and one

RESOURCES



[UsAgainstAlzheimer's Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship Website](#)

[UsAgainstAlzheimer's Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellowship Resource](#)

[UsAgainstAlzheimer's Brain Health Academy](#)

[NAHN - Congratulations to the 2024 Brain Health Equity Fellows](#)

[Dr. Charlene Whitaker-Brown Shares Her Experience as a 2022 Brain Health Equity Nurse Fellow](#)



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