

What were the goals of the University of Pennsylvania HBRN?

The University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) HBRN brings together Pennsylvania researchers from a variety of disciplines to conduct innovative public health and disease management research aimed at preventing chronic disease and reducing health disparities in Southeastern Pennsylvania. It aims to strengthen public and private sector community partnerships, improve understanding of how behavioral economics and public health strategies can reduce health risks, and extend training, education, and communication in high-risk and underserved populations in the region. Other goals include:

- 1) Establishing a research agenda on cognitive health and healthy aging.
- 2) Advancing collaborative and applied research in cognitive health.
- 3) Supporting fellowship training of its scholars.

What did the UPenn-HBRN accomplish?

The UPenn-HBRN focused largely on the *Healthy Brain Initiative: Public Health Road Map for State and National Partnerships, 2013-2018* action item, "Educate and Empower

E01" and worked to identify and promote culturally appropriate strategies to increase public awareness about dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, to reduce conflicting messages, decrease stigma, and to promote early diagnosis.

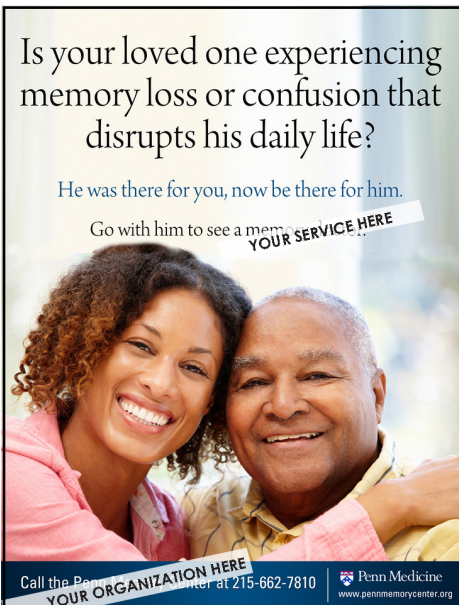
This work has included the development of theory-based, empirically tested, and culturally sensitive messages designed to encourage adult children of older adults with memory concerns to accompany their loved one to a doctor's appointment for a cognitive evaluation. Researchers are also working to better understand and reduce stigma related to Alzheimer's disease. These messages have since been used in cross-network efforts to understand their applicability to other populations and are available on request for personalization and dissemination.

The UPenn-HBRN work resulted in seven publications and four scientific presentations with contributions from its HBRN Scholars.



Messages were adapted based on the relationship of the pictured individuals. Adult children reported an expectation that their mother wouldn't want her child "burdened" with her clinical care. The message clarifies, "She needs you there." (See more on next page).





Adult children recalled their father “being there” for them. These messages ask children to now, “Be there for him.”

UPenn-HBRN's work to understand and reduce stigma includes nationally representative survey research that investigated the impact of factors such as treatment availability, clinical stage, and biomarker test results on the public stigma of Alzheimer's disease, with a particular focus on understanding stigma in the “preclinical” phase. Additional activities that address stigma include the photo gallery www.mytypicalday.org, which explores the lived experience of people with Mild Cognitive Impairment, and www.makingsenseofalzheimers.org, a creative space for people to understand the past, present, and future of Alzheimer's disease. The team used their experiences and findings to summarize conceptual and pragmatic challenges to addressing stigma as advances in early Alzheimer's disease diagnosis move into routine care, and to provide guidance for clinicians.

The Healthy Brain Research Network was a thematic network of CDC's Prevention Research Center Program and was funded by Cooperative Agreement: U48DP005053. The findings are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the CDC.

What is the HBRN Scholars Program?

HBRN Scholars collaborate with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), community partners, and other HBRN universities on research projects. The Scholars program pilots, develops, and shares models for scholarly, cognitive health engagement locally and across the network nationally.

The UPenn-HBRN Scholars program offered tailored opportunities for scholars ranging from undergraduates to early-career investigators, with backgrounds in varied disciplines including psychology, public health, medicine, communications, social work, and demography.

What is the UPenn-HBRN legacy?

UPenn-HBRN researchers will continue training the next generation of researchers, social workers, and clinicians, with an emphasis on maintaining a diverse workforce. Through print, web, and multimedia, researchers will explore a wide range of communications channels to better educate the general public about brain health and encourage healthy behaviors. They will collaborate with local and national partners to better accomplish these goals.

Contact Information

Jason Karlawish, MD
University of Pennsylvania
Email: jason.karlawish@uphs.upenn.edu