

Emory University's Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing Receives Major NIH Grant to Study Racial Disparities in Dementia Care

Atlanta, GA – Dr. Huiwen Xu, Associate Professor at Emory University's Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, has been awarded a prestigious R01 grant from the National Institute on Aging (NIA) titled, *Alzheimer's Special Care Units in Nursing Homes: Racial and Ethnic Disparities, Resident Outcomes, and State Policies (AG087296)*. This research project grant will investigate the role of Alzheimer's Special Care Units (SCUs) in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in dementia care within nursing homes. Outside collaborators include Dr. James Goodwin, who served as Dr. Xu's Pepper Scholar mentor, Dr. Yong-fang Kuo, Dr. Monique R. Pappadis, and Dr. Shuang Li from the University of Texas Medical Branch; and Dr. John R. Bowblis from Miami University of Ohio.

Alzheimer's Special Care Units (SCUs) represent a significant advancement in dementia care, offering tailored environments and specialized care for residents with Alzheimer's Disease & Related Dementias (ADRD). Despite the benefits of SCUs in improving health outcomes and quality of life for residents with ADRD, these units are currently available in only 14% of nursing homes nationwide. Moreover, access to SCUs is notably limited for Black and Hispanic residents, exacerbating disparities in care and outcomes.

Dr. Xu's research team will delve into the underlying causes of these disparities by analyzing national resident and facility data, including unique surveys from Ohio nursing homes. This study will examine SCU access as a critical pathway to understanding and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in dementia-related outcomes.

This grant award highlights Emory School of Nursing's commitment to advancing health equity and improving care for vulnerable populations. The findings from Dr. Xu's research have the potential to shape future policy decisions, ensuring that all individuals with dementia, regardless of race or ethnicity, receive the high-quality care they deserve.

Dr. Huiwen Xu, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University. Dr. Xu's research examines the staffing, quality, disparity, and policy in nursing homes using large administrative data and various survey data. He also leads another ongoing NIA-funded R01 project on visitation bans in nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic (AG081282). Dr. Xu is also interested in applying machine learning to aging research and has built various supervised and unsupervised machine learning models.

Dr. Xu has published 60+ peer-reviewed articles in leading medical and policy journals including The Lancet, JAMA Internal Medicine, JAMA Oncology, JAMA Network Open, Journal of Clinical Oncology, JAGS, JAMDA, Health Affairs, Health Services Research, and Medical Care; he coauthored two book chapters and 90+ scientific abstracts. His work has been cited 2,500+ times, with an H-index of 25.

Before coming to Emory, Dr. Xu held faculty positions at the University of Rochester Medical Center and University of Texas Medical Branch. He earned his PhD in Health Services Research and Policy with Data

Science training from the University of Rochester.

For more information on Dr. Huiwen Xu, visit his [profile](#). To learn more about the R01 Research Project grant, visit the National Institute of Aging (NIA) [website](#).

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About the School of Nursing

As one of the nation's top nursing schools, the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University is committed to educating visionary nurse leaders and scholars. Ranked the No. 1 master's, No. 2 BSN, and No. 6 DNP programs in the nation by U.S. News & World Report, the school is recognized as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League of Nursing. The school offers undergraduate, master's, doctoral and non-degree programs, bringing together cutting-edge resources, distinguished faculty, top clinical experiences, and access to leading health care partners to shape the future of nursing and impact the world's health and well-being. Learn more at nursing.emory.edu.