

Emory School of Nursing's Kalisha Bonds Johnson, PhD, Awarded Alzheimer's Association Grant for Culturally Tailored Dementia Care Initiative

ATLANTA, GA (September 6, 2024) – **Kalisha Bonds Johnson, PhD, RN, PMHNP-BC**, an Assistant Professor at Emory University's Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing, has been awarded a research grant from the Alzheimer's Association to support her groundbreaking project, "Developing a Primary Care Algorithm for Black American Dyads/Families." This two-year initiative aims to improve dementia care for Black American families by addressing long-standing racial disparities in healthcare access and quality for persons living with dementia (PLWD).

The prevalence of Alzheimer's disease among Black American older adults is nearly double that of non-Hispanic White older adults, further intensifying the caregiving burden within this racial group. This disparity highlights the urgent need for culturally tailored approaches in healthcare, especially in dementia care, where systemic and interpersonal racism has contributed to inequities in both access and outcomes. Black Americans living with dementia experience significantly higher rates of preventable hospitalizations compared to non-Hispanic White and Hispanic populations, underscoring the critical need for interventions that address these disparities.

"Black Americans living with dementia face unique challenges, from delayed diagnoses to inequities in healthcare delivery, and these obstacles are compounded by the burden placed on family caregivers," said Dr. Bonds Johnson. "Through this project, we hope to empower primary care providers and their staff to offer more culturally informed and equitable care that better meets the needs of Black American families of persons living with dementia."

With the shortage of dementia specialists nationwide, primary care providers (PCPs) play a crucial role in diagnosing and managing dementia in older adults. However, brief office visits and the lack of regular dementia assessments pose significant barriers to optimal care. Nurses and medical assistants, who are often the first point of contact for patients during triage, have a unique opportunity to conduct screenings and gather essential health information that can enhance communication between families and PCPs.

Dr. Bonds Johnson's research project will develop and assess a structured, culturally relevant algorithm that nurses or medical assistants can use during the triage process. The goal of this algorithm is to shape and inform conversations between PCPs and Black American families of persons living with dementia, known as dyads, which include the PLWD and their care partners or family members. Drawing from the Ecological Validity Framework, Cultural Adaptation Process Model, and the Black Family Soci-Ecological Context Model, this algorithm will be tailored specifically for the needs of Black American families navigating dementia care.

This initiative aligns with the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience (GUIDE) Model, which emphasizes the delivery of equitable care and the importance of addressing health disparities in dementia.

"We anticipate that by providing nurses and medical assistants with a structured, culturally relevant algorithm, we can significantly improve care outcomes for Black American dementia families," Dr. Bonds Johnson explained. "Our goal is to enhance communication, reduce preventable hospitalizations, and

ultimately contribute to a more equitable healthcare system for persons living with dementia and their families.”

Dr. Kalisha Bonds Johnson is an Assistant Professor, Tenure track at Emory University’s Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing in Atlanta, Georgia. She graduated from The University of Tennessee at Martin with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing in 2007. She graduated with a Master of Science in Nursing in 2012 from Vanderbilt University, specializing as a Family Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner. Most recently, Dr. Bonds Johnson graduated with a PhD from Oregon Health & Science University in 2019. During her PhD program, she was funded through several mechanisms, including the National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Aging, SAMHSA at American Nurses Association Minority Fellowship Program, and the Jonas Foundation as a Veterans Healthcare Scholar.

For more information on Dr. Kalisha Bonds Johnson, visit her [faculty profile](#). To learn more about the 2024 Supporting Research in Health Disparities, Policy and Ethics in Alzheimer’s Disease and Dementia Research (HPE-ADRD), visit the Alzheimer’s Association [website](#).

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