

# THE BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH STUDY

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF BLACK WOMEN

## A Message from the BWHS Advisory Board to BWHS Participants

**Jacqueline McLeod, MPH, M.Ed., Executive Director,  
Healing Communities Network, New York State**

***"No one can take your place."***

I have played a role in the BWHS as a member of the BWHS Advisory Board ever since its inception in 1995. As a black woman, I am very proud of the BWHS and its sole focus on assessing health issues of importance to black women. There was a time when we were completely left out of research. Of course all of this is made possible by the participation of women like you across the United States responding every two years to the health surveys. There has been awesome participation by black women from every walk of life. Because of the study design, only the women who began in the study in 1995 can be in the study now. No one new can join. No one can take your place.

It's important for us to continue. Findings are reported to you in regular newsletters, so you can take action to improve your health. The BWHS has accomplished much, but there is more to be done. For that reason, I strongly encourage you to complete your survey and to help make the BWHS a continued success.



**Ellen E. Grant, Ph.D., LCSW-R, Commissioner,  
Erie County Department of Senior Services**

***"I think of us as Research Pioneers."***

As I began my career as a nurse, I learned early on that so many diseases and illnesses in black women were overlooked due to a lack of research that could educate the health community of professionals as well as the women themselves. Thus I was excited to become a participant in the Black Women's Health Study when this ground breaking research project for black women began in 1995. Besides being a participant, I also serve on the Advisory Board. It is important that the Board have the advice and insight of someone who is a participant in the study.

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I choose to support the BWHS in any way that I can because of its health implications not just for me but for the national population of black women. So much knowledge about breast cancer, diabetes, fibroids, obesity, and a long list of other problems has come from our filling out the health surveys every other year. I think of us as Research Pioneers.

What invigorates me about BWHS is that this study, which has produced so much already, will produce even more as time goes on. Because as more information is collected, the database gets richer and more able to answer old and new questions. The study has forged many partnerships with experts – for example, in psychosocial stress, in air pollution, in genetics. I pray that all you who are participants will continue in this study. Doing so will make a better world for our friends, relatives, and neighbors. This is something we can then all continue to celebrate!

**Shiriki Kumanyika, Ph.D.**  
**Professor of Epidemiology, University of Pennsylvania;**  
**Founder and Chair, African American Collaborative**  
**Obesity Research Network**



***“The science is outstanding.”***

I have been involved in research on the health of African Americans since I began my Ph.D. studies at Cornell University in the mid-1970s. My Ph.D. research and early studies focused on the relationship of diet to the higher rate of hypertension in blacks than whites. It had seemed to me from childhood that all of the adults around me had high blood pressure, and I was intrigued by the possibility that something as common as the salt in our food could be part of the reason. I have continued to study diet and obesity as risk factors for hypertension, heart diseases, and cancer. I can remember how excited I was when the first grant from the National Institutes of Health was awarded to begin the BWHS, and I envisioned the ability to study black women’s health issues on a grand scale. I wanted to make sure that the BWHS could add to our knowledge about diet-related risks, and I was able to obtain separate funding to validate the dietary questionnaire. Since that time, I have enjoyed serving as an advisor to the BWHS and have had the opportunity to collaborate on many BWHS studies. The BWHS is an amazing and extremely important study and one that has been very productive. The evidence it generates is truly unique and has high credibility.

For the BWHS to continue contributing to improvements in the health of black women, it requires excellent science and high participation rates of the women in the study. I can assure you that the science is outstanding. For participation, we need you, because no one can replace you in the study. Please continue to contribute to the success of the BWHS by taking a few minutes to update information on your health.

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