

BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Foundation

FUNDING HEALTH EQUITY RESEARCH

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The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Foundation has awarded **\$325,000 to Meharry Medical College’s Center for the Study of Social Determinants of Health**. The grant will fund research by the nation’s largest private, historically Black academic health sciences center on barriers to health care, poor health outcomes and vaccine hesitancy in at-risk, largely minority communities.

Over the coming months, Meharry researchers will work with BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee’s clinical and data teams to use the company’s Social Vulnerability Index, a tool created to identify factors that increase risk for negative health outcomes, in developing strategies to improve health equity and COVID-19 vaccine acceptance.

Studies show that several factors impact an individual’s risk of developing severe COVID-19, including race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and lack of access to needed health providers/services such as primary care and behavioral health care. Meharry’s research will identify areas of Tennessee with a high density of at-risk individuals and guide strategies for interacting with communities to drive positive behavioral change and improve population health.



“We appreciate the BlueCross Foundation’s support of this research, which is guided by the feedback and input shared by our communities. We look forward to finding effective ways to combine precision medicine and public health approaches that can optimize health equity for Tennesseans.”

– Dr. Bryan Heckman, director, Meharry Medical College’s Center for the Study of Social Determinants of Health

