

Background

Dr. Crystal N. Piper is an Associate Professor in the Public Health Sciences at UNC Charlotte. She earned her PhD in Health Services Research/Policy and Management at the University of South Carolina, her MHA in Health Administration and her MPH in Public Health from Des Moines University, and a BS in Biology at South Carolina State University. Dr. Piper describes herself as a health services researcher and an academic public health practitioner who employs research methods, evidence-based practice, and community-driven program planning and evaluation strategies to assist vulnerable populations in improving their health.

Research Topics

“My research focuses on community-driven identification of problems, health across the lifespan, program development and evaluation, and health disparities. Over the past 15 years, my interests in public health were guided by my belief that quality health care is a right and not a privilege. I have witnessed inequalities in health, and the correlation between poverty, social injustice, sociocultural, and racial differences which laid the foundation for my research agenda.” She contributes to the identification and dismantling of these disparities by considering the health and well being of women and reducing and eliminating health disparities in chronic diseases and disease management through the lifespan, and exploring the interactions that exist between the components of the Aday and Andersen Behavioral Model. “The model suggest,” she notes, “that an individual’s use of health services is more than utilization and characteristics of the health system structure, but it is a function of predisposing (i.e. race, age); enabling (i.e. income, insurance); and need (disease management) factors. I focus on health behaviors and the characteristics of disparities in chronic diseases and disease management among vulnerable populations (minority, low-income, rural/urban). Dr. Piper focuses on community/academic partnerships that are translational in nature and involved disparities related to chronic diseases among vulnerable populations, and policy and practice recommendations that will improve the quality of health care delivery systems for these groups.”

Relevance

I have realized that the development of healthy lifestyles often begins at infancy and continues through the stages of life (i.e. infancy, childhood, adolescence, early adulthood, adulthood, and older adult), thus it is crucial to understand health differences across the lifespan. In an attempt to better explain the multiple determinants associated with a specific condition, my research agenda integrates a life course approach to prevent, promote, and protect the health of women and the study of chronic diseases and contributes to the advancement of my expertise in the field.