

Southern Community Cohort Study

annual publication for study participants



Welcome to the 2021 SCCS Annual Newsletter. After over 20 years conducting health research in the Southern Community Cohort Study, William Blot, PhD, retired this spring from Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Dr. Blot was the founding principal investigator for the SCCS and instrumental in carrying out study operations over the years to collect and analyze research data relevant to increasing understanding of the causes of cancer and other illnesses. We look forward to furthering his vision, and that of the SCCS, to reduce the burden of cancer and other illnesses among residents of the Southeast and help ameliorate disparities across population groups. We thank Dr. Blot for his many contributions to the SCCS, and wish him well in retirement.

Dr. Blot asked that we convey his best wishes to you as SCCS study participants, saying "It has been an honor and privilege for me to help lead this exceptional research effort, and I want to let all SCCS participants know how much their time and effort in this research are appreciated. The data you have provided have enabled us to help clarify what causes human diseases, develop strategies for disease prevention, and improve methods for early detection of cancer and other illnesses when therapies can be more effective. Thank you for being SCCS participants and for your steadfast dedication in helping others."

As the SCCS principal investigators, we are likewise dedicated to expanding Dr. Blot's legacy and advancing the SCCS mission.

Wei Zheng, MD, PhD
Martha Shrubsole, PhD



The SCCS COVID-19 Survey

Last fall and again this past summer, we asked you to answer surveys to find out how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected you. We received over 4,000 responses - thank you! Here are some things you told us about your experiences during the pandemic:

MEDICAL CARE DURING COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic made it difficult for many people to get the healthcare they need. Missed or delayed appointments were reported by 40% of SCCS participants. It was common for these appointments to be cancelled by the doctor's office or clinic early in the pandemic. Participants who had the most concern about being infected with COVID also missed many appointments.

It wasn't only health care appointments that people missed. 5% of participants reported avoiding emergency medical care during the COVID-19 pandemic, primarily due to fear and visitor restrictions. For those people who had to miss or skip health care appointments, it is important to get back on track with routine health care. "We also encourage those in need of emergency care to get it because avoidance may make the condition worse," says Deepak K. Gupta, MD, Assistant Professor of Medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Ni B et al. Disruption of medical care among individuals in the southeastern United States during the COVID-19 pandemic. *J Public Health Res.* 2021 Sep 24. doi: 10.4081/jphr.2021.2497. Online ahead of print.

MENTAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

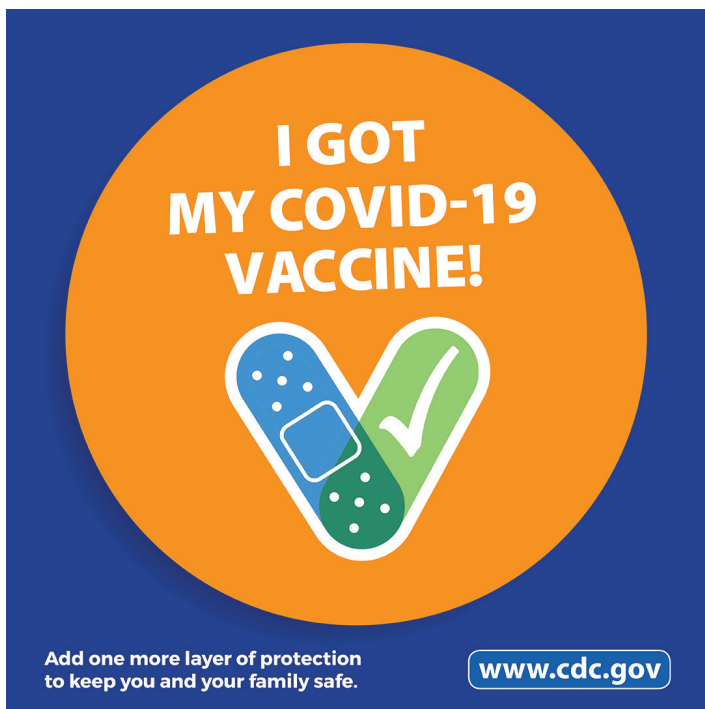
Mental health wellness is an important part of our daily lives. About 28% of SCCS participants reported depression, and 45% reported anxiety. These were more common among people who lived alone, had poor health, had low exercise levels, or who had a diet low in fruits and vegetables. High social support, such as having friends or family who could help out, protected people living alone from feeling depressed and anxious. If you are in crisis or are feeling unsafe, please use the **Crisis Text Line** by texting "HOME" to 741741 or call the **SAMHSA National Hotline** 1-800-622-4357 which is operated 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You may find additional information about well-being at the **Mental Health America** website <https://mhanational.org/covid19>.

We will not contact you about any individual test results found from conducting our laboratory research as part of this study. Please remember to get your yearly check-up and recommended health screenings.

COVID-19 VACCINATION

In Fall of 2020, 54% of SCCS participants were planning to have the COVID-19 vaccine when it became available. By Summer of 2021, 82% of participants reported they had already had at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Among participants who initially said that they did not want to have the vaccine, 65% had changed their minds and had at least one dose. Nearly all (97%) of these individuals chose to have the vaccine to protect themselves or their families. Many also found the recommendation of medical professionals (57%), friends or family (57%), political leaders (23%) or religious leaders (20%) to be important in their decision to become vaccinated. If you have not yet chosen to have the COVID-19 vaccine, learn more information about the vaccine and its safety at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) or your local health department.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>



It's important the Southern Community Cohort Study has your most current contact information. Please help us stay in touch with you!

If your email, address or telephone number have changed, call us toll free at **1-800-734-5057** or visit our website at www.southerncommunitystudy.org

New Lung Cancer Screening Guidelines

Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer deaths in the United States. This is because lung cancer is often detected when the cancer has already spread, which makes it difficult to treat. If lung cancer is found at an earlier stage, there is a greater likelihood it can be successfully treated. The good news is that screening tests are now available to find lung cancer early when it is still small and has not spread. The benefit of screening is that it lowers the chance of dying from lung cancer. These screening tests are recommended for certain people who smoke or used to smoke but don't have any signs or symptoms. Your participation in the SCCS helped lead to the current national lung cancer screening guidelines.

In 2013, screening for lung cancer was recommended by the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), the organization which establishes our national cancer screening guidelines. The lung cancer screening guidelines in 2013 were based on age and smoking history or how much and how long a person had smoked. At that time, persons eligible for lung cancer screening could be between the ages of 55-80, currently smoke or used to smoke within the last 15 years and have a 30 pack-year smoking history. Smoking history is calculated as the number of cigarette packs smoked per day multiplied times the number of years smoked. We recently looked at who was eligible for lung cancer screening under these national guidelines. We found that among persons diagnosed with lung cancer, the percentage of persons eligible for lung screening differed by race. Specifically, we found that a larger percentage of Whites were eligible for lung cancer screening than African Americans. We also found that a smaller percentage of African Americans diagnosed with lung cancer met the 30 pack-year smoking history requirement, making them not eligible for screening. We also found African Americans were diagnosed with lung cancer at an earlier age than Whites. These statistics meant that many African Americans were not eligible for lung cancer screening even though they had a high chance of developing lung cancer. As a result of these findings and your SCCS participation, the USPSTF changed their lung cancer screening guidelines this year. The USPSTF lowered the smoking history requirement and the minimum eligible age. The current guidelines for lung cancer screening are for persons who have smoked for at least 20 pack-years, age 50-80 years, and either currently smoke or used to smoke within the past 15 years. This change in policy by the USPSTF means that the new screening guidelines are more racially equitable. Our goal is to improve the lives of persons diagnosed with lung cancer and to narrow the gap in health disparities. We thank you for your participation which led to these important national screening guidelines.

Talk to your licensed healthcare professional if you think you may be interested in lung screening or stopping smoking.

Aldrich MC, Mercaldo SF, Sandler K, Blot WJ, Grogan EL, Blume JD. (2019) Evaluation of USPSTF Lung Cancer Screening Guidelines among African American Adult Smokers. *JAMA Oncology*. Jun 27;5(9):1318-24. PMID: 31246249

LUNG CANCER SCREENING

DID YOU KNOW?

Lung cancer is responsible for the **most cancer deaths in the U.S.** of all types of cancers.

Lung cancer **symptoms usually do not appear** until the cancer is already at an advanced stage.

THE GOOD NEWS!

Catching lung cancer early **decreases the risk of death by 20%.**

CHECK BELOW FOR SCREENING ELIGIBILITY

SHOULD YOU GET SCREENED?

1. ARE YOU BETWEEN 50-80 YEARS OLD?

YES →

2. DO YOU CURRENTLY SMOKE?

OR

← YES
HAVE YOU QUIT IN THE LAST 15 YEARS?



Scan here using phone camera app

For additional resources:

visit this link: <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/lung-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging.html>

Veggie Scramble

- Cooking spray
- 10 spinach leaves, washed
- 2 tablespoons diced bell pepper
- 1 large egg
- 1 egg white
- 2 tablespoons reduced-fat shredded cheese
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Spray a medium-sized skillet with cooking spray, being sure to coat well. Heat on medium-high.
2. Add spinach leaves and bell peppers to heated pan and sauté for 3 minutes. If needed, add 1 tablespoon of water to help cook the spinach.
3. While the vegetables are cooking, combine one egg and one egg white in a small bowl and whisk together.
4. Add the eggs to heated skillet and cook over medium-high heat until the egg starts to set.
5. Add cheese and allow it to melt, about 30 seconds.
6. Season with salt and pepper to taste.



Recipe from Health Plus, the wellness program supporting Vanderbilt University Medical Center employees.

Nutrition Information

Serving size: 1 recipe Calories: 159 Fat: 8 grams Saturated fat: 3.6 grams Carbohydrates: 6 grams Sodium: 285 milligrams
Fiber: 2.6 grams Protein: 16 grams

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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