Welcome to the 20th anniversary celebration of the SCCS! As we look back over these past 20 years, we are most grateful for your participation in the SCCS. As a direct result of your support, we have published more than 350 research papers to answer significant questions related to cancer and other diseases. For example, research from SCCS participants helped to make more people eligible for lung cancer screening to catch lung cancer early.

In this issue, you will find a timeline of some of the key events in the history of the SCCS, some recent research findings, as well as information about a new research study. Did you know that the first participant joined the study in March 2002 in Atlanta, Georgia and the final participant joined the study in September 2009? And while 94% of SCCS participants still live in the South, many have moved to all 50 states. Thank you for keeping in touch!

You will also read about a new sister study called the Southern Environmental Health Study. If you or people you know are between the ages of 40 and 70 and live in the southeastern states, you are eligible to join this new study too! Please see page 3 to learn more.

Can you think back to what you were doing 20 years ago? We’ve all seen a lot of changes in these past 20 years. What hasn’t changed is our commitment to ensure that the information you have shared about your lives and health is used to help improve the health for all people. Look for the next short survey in your mailbox or inbox in the coming months.

With gratitude,

Wei Zheng, MD, PhD          Martha Shrubsole, PhD

SPOTLIGHT ON SCCS COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

Over 70 community health centers joined the SCCS to recruit members from their communities (see the map on page 4). One of these centers was the East Arkansas Family Health Center (EAFHC) in West Memphis, Arkansas. The EAFHC provides primary and preventive health care services to West Memphis and surrounding communities. They joined the SCCS in 2004. Over 1,800 people joined the SCCS through their participation at EAFHC. The team at East Arkansas has now become a partner for the new Southern Environmental Health Study. When asked why they are excited about the new study, Dr. Susan Ward-Jones, CEO, of EAFHC said, “It’s important that people throughout the South have the opportunity to join research studies such as the SEHS. When our communities are represented in research, it moves us all closer to a cleaner and healthier environment.”

Thank you EAFHC and all of the other community health centers for the work you do to make healthier communities around the South and for your long partnership with the SCCS.

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.
Over the past 20 years, SCCS research has improved both how scientists understand and how doctors treat diseases like cancer or heart disease. Here are some highlights:

In 2022, SCCS researchers found that intakes of polyphenols, a dietary antioxidant found mainly in food from plants, were associated with a reduced risk of colorectal cancer. Increasing intake of fruits, vegetables, and tea may help to reduce the risk of colorectal cancer. This is especially true for Black SCCS participants who had lower intakes of polyphenols.


In 2019, SCCS researchers published a paper describing how lung cancer screening guidelines were not equitable for Black smokers at high risk for cancer. As a result, the guidelines have been changed to be more equitable.


In 2016, SCCS researchers began to study the prevention of heart disease with a new tool - a single “Polypill” containing 4 common heart medicines combined into one pill. This approach resulted in lower blood pressure and LDL cholesterol when compared to the group receiving their usual medical care.


HOW SCCS RESEARCH BENEFITS OUR COMMUNITIES

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SCCS

2001
Initial Study Funding Received
SCCS funded by National Cancer Institute

2002
Enrollment Begins
The first SCCS participant was enrolled in March 2002 in Atlanta, Georgia

50,000th Participant Enrolled
The SCCS enrolled its 50,000th participant on October 5, 2005 in Tuscaloosa, Alabama

2009
Enrollment Completed
The last SCCS participant was enrolled in September 2009 in Flora, Mississippi

2014
Follow-up Milestone
Over 100,000 follow-up surveys received from participants

2020
The Fight Against Covid
Participants unite in the fight against COVID-19 by joining the first online survey conducted by the SCCS

2020
Study Funding Renewed
SCCS funding was renewed by the National Cancer Institute

2023
Fifth Follow-Up
Beginning soon, participants will be contacted for a fifth follow-up
From the start of the SCCS, it was clear that there was an unmet need for research into high rates of cancer and other chronic diseases in the South. Racial and economic disparities contributed to these poor health outcomes. We were fortunate that government, academia, and local communities all recognized the importance of the SCCS. Our team at Vanderbilt University, Meharry Medical College, and International Epidemiology Institute approached over 70 community health centers as research partners, and their response was overwhelmingly positive. Our first participants enrolled in 2002 in health centers in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Tennessee. From there we expanded to all 12 states in the southeast U.S., eventually enrolling over 85,000 participants who joined us to advance this important research.

After 20 years, I continue to be humbled by the altruism of SCCS participants for choosing to join the study and for their continuing support. It is inspiring to see so many people offering their time and effort in the hope of helping others.

William Blot, Ph.D.
Founding Principal Investigator of the SCCS
Addresses of SCCS Participants and Community Health Centers

Addresses Service Requested

Jacksonville, FL 32207
1300 Riverside Blvd., Suite #601
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Community Health Center
Participant address at enrollment