

Background

Dr. Willie Mae Abel is an assistant professor in the School of Nursing at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses and conducts research on cardiovascular disease in African Americans/Blacks. She received her master's and PhD in nursing from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Dr. Abel has published widely in journals and her articles have addressed topics such as ischemic heart disease, heart failure, myocardial infarction, hypertension, depression, trust in healthcare providers, and medication adherence. Recently, Dr. Abel was inducted as a Fellow of the American Heart Association in recognition of her scientific and professional accomplishments as well as her volunteer leadership and service.

Research

Her research explores an area that has been understudied in the medical community, Black women with hypertension. Hypertension is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women in the United States, with a substantially higher death rate among Black women. Black women have the highest prevalence rate of hypertension in the world, and reasons for this disparity are not fully understood. Dr. Abel studies methods to improve blood pressure control for black women with hypertension and her research has implications for others with this disorder.

Relevance

Dr. Abel's work is directed towards impacting individuals, families, and communities with cardiovascular disease. Because Blacks develop hypertension earlier in life with greater severity and more organ damage compared to other racial/ethnic groups, there is a disproportionate burden of increased morbidity, disability, and mortality related to stroke, heart attack, heart failure, and kidney disease. Therefore, her work to develop and target interventions for blood pressure control in Black women with hypertension will contribute to improved health outcomes and reduced health care costs.