

Addressing the Impact of COVID-19 on Social Isolation and Loneliness

September 20, 2024, 2:00 PM – 3:00 PM ET

Purpose

The public health measures implemented to control the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted normal social interactions, exacerbating preexisting concerns about increasing levels of social isolation and loneliness across various age groups. As localities experience shifts in pandemic-related supplemental federal resources, state and local governments, healthcare providers, community-based organizations, and other partners have a timely opportunity and a pressing need to address this issue.

Join our webinar to learn strategies from the social and behavioral sciences to address the impact of COVID-19 on loneliness and social isolation.

2:00–2:05 pm

Welcome and Introductions

Don Operario, Emory University

Member of the Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences

2:05–2:25 pm

Part 1: Stage Setting

- Thomas Cudjoe, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
- Marla Berg-Weger, Saint Louis University

2:25–2:58 pm

Part 2: Moderated Q&A

- Thomas Cudjoe, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
- Marla Berg-Weger, Saint Louis University

2:58–3:00 pm

Closing Reflections

Don Operario, Emory University

Member of the Board on Behavioral, Cognitive, and Sensory Sciences

PANELIST BIOGRAPHIES

Don Operario

Don Operario is Rollins Distinguished Professor and Chair of the Department of Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences at Emory University, Rollins School of Public Health. Trained in social and health psychology, his research program addresses the intersections of infectious disease, mental health, and structural vulnerability, with an emphasis on health equity and cultural humility. He conducts research in collaboration with community and academic partners in the United States, China, Kenya, Philippines, South Africa, and South Korea.

Thomas Cudjoe

Thomas Cudjoe, M.D., M.P.H. is the 2021 Caryl & George Bernstein CIM/HAP Scholar at the John Hopkins School of Medicine. He is an Assistant Professor of Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology and is investigating a relationship between social isolation and inflammatory biomarkers. His recent findings from a large nationally represented study indicate that social isolation has biological influences and could lead to poor health outcomes such as dementia and premature mortality — a finding of particular import since 1 in 4 community dwelling adults over age 65 are considered socially isolated. Cudjoe's work points to the importance of developing programs and interventions to address isolation among the aged.

Dr. Marla Berg-Weger

Marla Berg-Weger, PhD, LCSW, Professor Emerita, Saint Louis University School of Social Work is the Executive Director of the Gateway Geriatric Education Center in the Division of Geriatric Medicine, School of Medicine and Program Director for the HRSA-funded Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program. Her scholarly work has focused on family caregiving, non-pharmacologic interventions for persons with dementia, loneliness and social isolation, age-friendly health and behavioral health care, driving and older adults, and social work practice. She has authored four books—two in 6th edition—and over 100 publications. She is a past president of the National Association for Geriatric Education and the Association for Gerontology Education in Social Work and Chair of the Gerontological Society of America Social Research and Policy Practice Section. She is currently the Managing Editor of the Journal of Gerontological Social Work and serves on the Age-Friendly Health Systems Research Council.