

Dr. Marvella Ford, Associate Director of Cancer Disparities, Hollings Cancer Center, Medical University of South Carolina and Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences will speak July 15, 11 AM-1 PM on Cultural Competency in Clinical Trials during the NRG Oncology Semiannual Meeting in Dallas, Texas.

Dr. Ford is the PI on a NIH funded center grant titled South Carolina Disparities Research Center (SC CaDRe). The goal of the SC CaDRe is to expand cancer disparities research in South Carolina while cultivating a diverse network of cancer researchers. The grant provides funding to train underrepresented students and junior faculty in cancer research methods. She is also a PI on a NIH-funding grant to increase the participation of diverse participants in cancer research and leads a DOD and NIH-funded summer undergraduate cancer research training program in collaboration with three historically black colleges/universities (HBCUs) in South Carolina. She is the author of more than 75 published scientific articles.

Dr. Ford will address how culture influences health problems, how symptoms are expressed and discussed and how health care information is received. Health care decision-making can also be influenced by demographic factors. In order to provide culturally competent cancer care, healthcare providers must value diversity, recognize the dynamics of cultural interactions, and consider solutions that take those diverse interactions into consideration. As less than 1% of underrepresented minority groups are currently enrolled in clinical trials, gaining a better understanding of how patients perceive illness and treatment, educating patients and family members about symptom management and learning how to better communicate with their treatment team will enhance the ultimate goal of reducing cancer-related health disparities.