

Brain Health Initiative Launches Community Study

Featuring collaborative leadership from Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital and Academy for Brain Health and Performance

LAKEWOOD RANCH, FLORIDA, USA, August 31, 2020 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An initial brain health



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Stephanie Peabody, Ph.D.

study, part of the [Brain Health Initiative](#), is being launched in [Lakewood Ranch](#) and the greater Suncoast region. The study is part of a larger initiative developed with the collaborative leadership of Massachusetts General Hospital, a Harvard Medical School Teaching Hospital. It strives to create brain healthy communities that promote brain health and fight brain illness, while optimizing brain performance at every age.

The approach includes a collective impact framework that seeks to engage community members in the full brain health promotion, research, and innovative process. Once

fully launched and underway, the BHI is anticipated to be the largest brain healthy living laboratory in the world, and will have developed a replicable and scalable model to create other thriving brain healthy communities.

Jennifer Bencie, M.D., health officer for the Florida Department of Health in Manatee County, and Andy Guz, CEO of Lakewood Ranch Medical Center, are also working with BHI on this early step in the initiative’s effort to build brain healthy communities. Bencie and Guz and the Brain Health Initiative’s Founder and Executive Director, Stephanie Peabody, Ph.D., are encouraging randomly selected Lakewood Ranch residents to participate in the pilot study.

“After decades of neuroscience research, while science brings opportunity and hope, we’re in a crisis,” said Peabody. “The current state of science and real-life experience demonstrates that there is a global brain health crisis and most of the public is in the dark regarding its ability to take control of brain health and daily performance.” She continued, “Surveys have found that a majority of Americans consider dementia a natural part of getting older, while scientists say the opposite. Many experts consider brain health to be the biggest medical priority of the 21st century.”

“The Florida Suncoast region has a rare opportunity to participate in the pilot of what will become a world-class, comprehensive initiative of brain health,” said Guz. Randomly selected Lakewood Ranch adult residents will begin receiving invitations to participate in the brain health pilot study in the next several weeks.

“The pilot study is the next of many brain health projects initiated in and planned for the Suncoast region toward the effort of improving brain health and optimizing performance outcomes for people of all ages, while also decreasing the gap between life span and brain span,” explained Peabody. “The Brain Health Initiative will use data analyzed from the pilot to inform the identification of innovative brain health interventions to bring to the Suncoast region through the developing Brain Health Innovation Lab. This lab is being designed as an accelerator lab where solutions from a global explosion of brain health innovations can be brought and tested with the region’s residents, students, workforce and visitors—young and older—to participate in clinical trials that promote brain health, fight brain illness, and optimize performance.”

The program was created by Peabody and her colleagues who looked at the current brain health crisis and decades of advances in neuroscience, medicine, and public health as an opportunity to protect and enhance brain health and optimize brain performance outcomes. The American Heart Association states that 3 out of 5 of all Americans will develop a brain disease in their lifetime. “Understanding what causes brain health problems and how best to prevent brain illness remains one of the biggest medical mysteries of our time,” said Bencie. “Especially now—when discoveries related to brain health and brain illness, across the lifespan, are critically needed worldwide. I hope every community member who is contacted will step up to help this team of scientists and our region by participating in this study.”

The Brain Health Initiative officially launched in 2018 with a survey—the Lakewood Ranch Brain Health Community Stakeholder Prioritization Survey. The results of that survey informed the development of the pilot study. The pilot study will collect data specifically about how Lakewood Ranch residents function mentally, socially, cognitively and biologically. It will pay special attention to what Lakewood Ranch reported as brain health priorities. Epidemiologist and Research Director of the Brain Health Initiative, Erin Dunn, Ph.D. explained “adult residents of the community will be randomly selected to participate in a confidential online questionnaire and complete a series of cognitive computer games. The survey includes questions about health habits, medical conditions, social relationships, recreational activities and experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Those participating will also be asked to share information about health behaviors such as exercise, nutrition, smoking, alcohol usage, sleep patterns, as well as demographic information.”

The pilot study will help researchers capture risk and protective factors linked to brain health across multiple domains. They’ll incorporate key “lessons learned” from other successful community-based, population health projects including the [Framingham Heart Study](#), The Blue Zones and Shape Up Somerville to identify ways to protect brain health across the lifespan of

an individual and at the community level.

In addition to establishing a robust brain health baseline of the community that will lead to greater opportunities for scientific discovery, the goal of the BHI is to recruit brain health scientists, innovators, and entrepreneurs from around the world to also support the brain health of the region. "This program is a multi-generational living lab," said Peabody. "We hope to gain significant insights into learning the best possible ways to positively impact brain health. After decades of neuroscience research, we have an opportunity to bring hope to this crisis so that the public will be able to use 'prevention and early detection' as a viable path to significantly reducing incidence of brain illness."

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