

# SGS VIRTUAL ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE

## CONFERENCE TRACK KEY

- A** = ADVOCACY FOR OR BY OLDER ADULTS
- H** = AGE-RELATED HEALTH AND WELLNESS
- C** = CAREGIVING, CARE SUPPORT, AND CARE PARTNERSHIPS
- D** = DIVERSITY TOPICS IN AGING COMMUNITIES
- G** = GERONTOLOGICAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

## THURSDAY, APRIL 9TH

**2:00 PM – 3:30 PM**

### **PRESIDENT'S OPENING - BUILDING RESILIENT AGING: INNOVATION, PARTNERSHIP, AND PURPOSE**

*Dr. Ethlyn Gibson, Old Dominion University*



Resilient aging is cultivated through intentional collaboration, evidence-based innovation, and shared commitment across community, academia, health care, and advocacy. As our aging society grows in complexity and diversity, the need to strengthen protective factors that promote physical health, mental well-being, and cognitive vitality has never been more urgent.

This Presidential Opening will explore resilience as a multidimensional framework that supports better physical health outcomes, protects against mental health challenges, and sustains cognitive functioning across the lifespan. Grounded in current research and real-world practice, the session will examine how innovative programs, interdisciplinary partnerships, and inclusive advocacy efforts create environments where older adults can adapt, recover, and thrive.

Aligned with the mission of the Southern Gerontological Society — to improve the quality of life for older adults through education, research, and practice — this address will highlight how bridging gerontological education, research, and applied practice leads to measurable impact. By strengthening collaboration among academic institutions, clinical systems, community organizations, and research networks, we move from isolated efforts to coordinated pathways of support.

**3:30 PM – 4:45 PM**

### **WE CAN DO BETTER: AGE-FRIENDLY HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE**

*Dr. Eduardo Sanchez, American Heart Association*



As the median age of the United States rises, the nation must build its health and health care capacity to be more age-friendly. In this session the topics of age-friendly public health, the relationship between frailty and cardiovascular health, and the importance of age-friendly primary care will be covered.

## FRIDAY, APRIL 10TH

8:30 AM – 9:30 AM

### **PRESIDENT'S SPOTLIGHT SESSION - Bridge Youth: A Culturally Responsive Workforce Pathway for Adolescent Dementia Caregivers of Color**

*Dr. Bashir Easter & Jarett Fields, Melanin Minded*



Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) disproportionately affect communities of color, resulting in greater reliance on informal family caregiving. Within these households, adolescents often assume substantial caregiving responsibilities, including assistance with activities of daily living and supervision of relatives with cognitive impairment. Despite their contributions, adolescent dementia caregivers remain largely invisible within aging services, education systems, and workforce development initiatives.

Bridge Youth is a community-based, culturally responsive program designed to support adolescent dementia caregivers of color while translating informal caregiving experiences into recognized and transferable workforce skills. The program was implemented as an eight-week, in-person pilot serving youth ages 16–20 who were actively providing care to a family member with ADRD symptoms. The curriculum integrated dementia education, communication strategies, personal care assistance, infection control, residents' rights, and culturally affirming caregiving practices. Instruction was delivered through a combination of classroom learning, skills-based laboratory training, and supervised practicum experiences.

Preliminary findings indicate that participants demonstrated increased dementia knowledge, improved caregiving confidence, and reduced stigma associated with ADRD. Youth reported greater recognition of caregiving as a valued skill set and increased interest in future education or careers in healthcare, aging services, or social support fields.

Families described improved communication and greater appreciation of adolescents' caregiving roles within the household.

Bridge Youth reframes adolescent caregiving as both a public health concern and a workforce opportunity. By centering equity, culture, and intergenerational caregiving, the program offers a scalable model for strengthening dementia-capable communities and expanding pathways into the gerontological workforce.

---

9:45 AM – 11:15 AM

### **PRESIDENT'S SPOTLIGHT SESSION - Innovative Advocacy Approaches for and by Older Black Americans: Two Unique Examples**

*Dr. Ronit Elk, University of Alabama, Birmingham*

*C. Nathaniel Brown, Expose Dementia*

*Pastor J.R. Finney, Covenant Church*

*Pastor Geraldine Daniels, Southside CME Church*

*Linda Michelle Trainer*



Two advocacy approaches created by and for older Black American; each will include: 35m panel discussion and 10m audience interaction.

*Remember Me: Dementia in the African American Community:* Mr. Brown, the documentary's producer, will discuss his motives for creating the film – witnessing the challenges facing African American adults with dementia and their families. He will describe the impact of the film shown in communities, schools and churches in more than 30 cities nationwide, on African American audiences, and the call for more advocacy for older adults in the community. Mrs. Trainer, who provided care to her mother and husband for 14 years, will discuss the unexpected challenges they encountered, how she navigated these, and how it changed her into an advocate for people living with dementia and their care partners.

*Black American Communities Speak: Development of a Training Program BY the Black American community FOR Healthcare Providers:* Researchers partnered equitably with a Community Advisory Board (CAB) of Black Americans to create a training program to teach clinicians to respect the cultural values of Black American, recognize their previous negative experiences in healthcare, and how to communicate respectfully. Clinicians from 50 settings were trained, and reported understanding, respecting and honoring the community's cultural values, and implementing the CAB's recommendations. Dr. Elk will highlight the approach that guided this study, Community Based Participatory Research, a social justice advocacy approach. Pastor Finney and Pastor Daniels, members of the CAB, will share how the CAB guides the study and determines the program content.

---

## 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

### **KEYNOTE - ANCHORS OF RESILIENCE: ADVOCATING FOR CREATIVITY AND COMMUNITY IN DEMENTIA CARE**

*Dr. Marc Rothman, Lizzy Care*



Evidence shows that bringing art into your life even once a year lowers your risk of mortality by 14 percent. Wired to appreciate the arts, our brains crave the rich tapestry of detail in a theater, a painting, or a film, at all stages of life. Dementia Spring convenes artists, academics and innovators in fellowship, to advocate for the creation of accessible, inclusive

spaces to enjoy and create art for those living with memory loss. Using examples from the work of current and former Dementia Spring Fellowship projects like *Mercedes*, the Day By Day Project, DanceStream, and Improv For Caregivers, this keynote will explore how to build resilience in aging anchored in social engagement, creativity, and community by looking to international models and local innovations.

---

## 1:30 PM – 3:00 PM

### **Advancing Dementia Diagnosis and Care Pathways Paper Session**

This session examines approaches to improving dementia diagnosis, care planning, and support across the care continuum. Papers highlight early identification, caregiver engagement, and evidence-based tools that enhance care quality and reduce avoidable harms.

#### ***Early Diagnosis, Lower Costs: The Impact of Georgia Memory Net***

*Emerald Anglin, Emory University*



#### ***From Assessment to Engagement: Supporting Care Partners Working with Individuals with Moderate to Severe Dementia (Student Paper)***

*Stephanie Richings & Dr. Natalie Douglas, University of Louisiana at Lafayette*



#### ***Improving Palliative Dementia Care through Evidence-Based Caregiver Guides and a Caregiver Communication Toolkit***

*Dr. Meredith Troutman-Jordan & Dr. Boyd Davis, University of North Carolina at Charlotte*



***Before You Accept the Diagnosis: Identifying Medication-Induced Cognitive Decline in Older Adults***

*Dr. Jered Yalung, Options Home Care*



---

**3:15 PM – 4:15 PM**

**PRESIDENT'S SPOTLIGHT SESSION -  
Navigator: A Dementia-Capable  
Transportation Model to Support Aging in  
Place and Caregiver Well-Being**

*Dr. Bashir Easter & Jarett Fields, Melanin Minded*



Transportation access is a critical yet often overlooked determinant of health, independence, and quality of life for older adults living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ARD). Cognitive impairment, safety concerns, and loss of driving privileges frequently result in social isolation, missed medical appointments, and increased caregiver burden. These challenges are especially pronounced in underserved and minority communities where transportation options may be limited or lack dementia-informed practices.

Navigator is a community-based, dementia-capable transportation model designed to support older adults with cognitive impairment and their care partners through safe, reliable, and culturally responsive mobility services. The program integrates specialized driver training, dementia-informed communication strategies, and coordination with caregivers and community organizations. Navigator was developed using a community-engaged approach informed by caregiver experiences, best practices in dementia care, and aging-in-place principles.

Preliminary implementation insights indicate that dementia-capable transportation can reduce caregiver stress by providing trusted mobility alternatives and improving appointment adherence. Care partners reported increased peace of mind and

reduced logistical strain, while riders demonstrated improved access to healthcare services and community engagement. Driver training contributed to greater understanding of dementia-related behaviors and increased confidence in serving cognitively impaired passengers.

Navigator reframes transportation as an essential component of dementia-capable communities rather than a peripheral service. By embedding cognitive awareness and person-centered practices into transportation systems, this model offers a scalable approach to promoting autonomy, equity, and resilience among older adults and their caregivers.

---

**4:30 PM – 5:30 PM**

**The Power of Occupation: Why Meaningful Engagement Is Critical for People Living with Dementia and How to Implement Strategies for Participation**

*Dr. Laura Novak, Texas Christian University*



Participation in meaningful daily activities, or occupations, serves a critical role in maintaining physical and cognitive abilities and psychosocial well-being. Additionally, occupational engagement serves to decrease the risk for loneliness and social isolation. For people living with dementia, participation in daily activities often declines as physical and cognitive abilities change. Care partners often struggle to find ways to promote engagement in meaningful activities, especially when behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) become a factor. Occupational therapy practitioners focus on maintaining engagement in meaningful activities in order to promote sense of purpose and sense of self. By examining the root cause of BPSD and assessing barriers to engagement, we can find appropriate ways to modify activities to an optimal level. In this course, participants will learn about the neurological impact of occupational engagement. Additionally, participants will learn how to begin to investigate the root cause of BPSD and how to subsequently modify

activities to meet the needs of their care partners. Finally, participants will learn about an evidence-based program created with multiple community collaborators to successfully provide opportunities for artistic and reminiscence-based engagement for persons with dementia living in the community.

## SATURDAY, APRIL 11TH

7:00 AM – 9:00 AM

### SGS ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING BREAKFAST

Regardless of your SGS membership status, all attendees are welcome to attend this annual meeting of the society. Our committees will report on their activities and successes over this past year and share exciting news about upcoming activities. Come and learn more about SGS and ways to get involved!

9:15 AM – 10:45 AM

### Affirming Care and Empowered Decision-Making in LGBTQIA+ Aging

This session examines how LGBTQIA+ older adults and caregivers navigate healthcare and caregiving systems shaped by stigma, exclusion, and structural inequities. Bringing together community-engaged research and social work-informed practice, the session highlights innovative, affirming approaches that center self-determination, chosen family, and intersectionality. Presentations explore tools and strategies that empower transgender older adults in healthcare decision-making and address the often-invisible labor of LGBTQIA+ caregivers—particularly those who are BIPOC and/or low-income. Collectively, the session underscores the importance of culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and equity-oriented interventions to improve health, caregiving, and aging outcomes across the LGBTQIA+ spectrum.

#### *Transforming Choices: Navigating Healthcare Decisions with Transgender Older Adults*

*Dr. Lauren Catlett, University of Virginia*



This presentation introduces *Transforming Choices*, a community-engaged digital resource co-designed by and for transgender older adults to support empowered healthcare decision-

making in later life. Through an interactive demonstration, the session explores key topics such as transitioning in later life, advance care planning, long-term care, and end-of-life decision-making, highlighting the value of collaborative, action-oriented research for improving care for transgender elders.

***Chosen Family, Chosen Care: Caregiving Among the LGBTQIA+ Spectrum***

*Ernesto Finales, SAGE USA/ CUNY School of Public Health*

*Dana Barker LMSW, SAGE USA/ Hunter College-Silberman School of Social Work*



Focusing on LGBTQIA+ caregivers, this presentation examines how intersecting oppressions related to gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and socioeconomic status shape caregiving experiences—particularly for BIPOC and low-income caregivers. Drawing from a social work perspective, it highlights affirming, trauma-informed interventions and policy strategies that recognize chosen family, address economic injustice, and promote equitable access to caregiving supports.

---

**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM**

**Cross-Sectoral Impact: Advancing a Rural Age-Friendly Ecosystem**

*Dr. Kina White, KIW Consulting, LLC*

Population aging in rural communities presents unique challenges and opportunities for advancing age-friendly environments. Addressing these challenges requires cross-sectoral collaboration that extends beyond traditional aging services to include health care, housing, transportation, social services, and community development. This presentation examines the cross-sectoral impact of efforts to advance a rural age-friendly ecosystem, with a focus on how coordinated, place-based strategies support the health, well-being, and social inclusion of older

adults in rural settings. Drawing on practice-based evidence and emerging frameworks, this presentation will demonstrate how partnerships across sectors mitigate structural barriers common in rural areas, including geographic isolation, limited service availability, and workforce constraints. Key facilitators of successful cross-sector collaboration—such as shared goals, local leadership, and community engagement—are identified, alongside challenges related to sustainability, funding alignment, and governance. The presentation will highlight the importance of integrating aging considerations into broader rural development initiatives and demonstrate how cross-sector approaches can strengthen age-friendly outcomes at the community level. Implications for gerontologists, practitioners, and policymakers are discussed, emphasizing strategies to foster collaboration, enhance system-level coordination, and promote equitable aging in place for rural older adults.

---

**12:00 PM – 2:30 PM**

**SGS/SPO AWARDS CEREMONY**

Join us in a celebration of those who have been recognized for one of SGS's many prestigious awards. We are also thrilled to be including the Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) awards ceremony in our celebration.

---

**3:00 PM – 4:30 PM**

**Delivering on High Quality Care in Long-Term Care During Uncertain Times: What Matters?**

*Dr. Christopher Kelly, University of Nebraska at Omaha*

*Dr. Sandi Lane, University of North Carolina at Charlotte*

*Dr. Jennifer Craft Morgan & Dr. Candace Kemp, Georgia State University*



This panel session brings together four papers, using various methods (e.g. survey data, semi-structured

interviews, case studies) that consider implications of training programs, work environments and engagement programming relation to both care outcomes and staff outcomes in long-term care. Attendees will leave with a more nuanced understanding of the complex relationships between worker competencies and care outcomes and will be able to identify promising practices to bring back to their communities and/or research agenda.

---

Proxy Workforce" to slash preventable ER utilization and optimize regional expenditure.

This is a masterclass in professional ascent. Attendees will leave with a forensic toolkit to secure their program's future and bridge the gap between clinical excellence and systemic power. Don't just watch the tide come in; learn how to govern it.

## 4:45 PM – 5:45 PM

### **The Longevity Manifesto: Engineering Legislative ROI and Transformative Governance in the Southern Landscape**

*Dr. TimMarie (Chloe') Williams, University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine*



Stop managing the "Silver Tsunami" as a crisis of scarcity and start engineering it as a Longevity Dividend. While traditional sessions focus on clinical observation and theory, this session introduces a new mandate for the 21st-century leader: the "Scholar-Statesman." This model represents a high-stakes hybrid of academic rigor and legislative acumen, designed to move aging programs from "discretionary line-items" to permanent fiscal mandates.

This blueprint deconstructs the mechanics of Transformative Governance through three high-impact pillars:

- The Architecture of Power: Master the "Nelson Lens" to translate clinical data into Legislative ROI, the strategic art of proving that clinical outcomes are economic assets.
- The Alchemy of Agility: Utilizing the Governor's Teaching Fellowship and GCAM frameworks, learn how "Accreditation Resilience" protects programs and ensures systemic stability during institutional mergers.
- The Soul of the System: Shift from "outreach" to "Trust Equity," operationalizing a "Clinical

# SGS ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE AGENDA

## VIRTUAL PRESENTATIONS

These presentations will be pre-recorded and available to conference attendees following the conference.

### **Comparing Memory Exercises and Cholinesterase Inhibitors in Women Aged 65+ With Alzheimer's Disease: A Systematic Review dressing Physical Inactivity in Older Adults: Socioecological Barriers and Solutions Across Rural Communities (Student Paper)**

*Madeleine Banks, Tyson Keyser, Nhu Pham & Dr. TimMarie (Chloe') Williams, University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine*



As Alzheimer's disease (AD) disproportionately affects women over 65, finding sustainable, low-risk treatment pathways is essential for promoting resilient aging. This session presents a systematic review comparing the efficacy of Memory Exercise (ME) therapy against the clinical standard, Cholinesterase Inhibitors (CI), over a six-month period.

The presentation synthesizes evidence from 11 randomized controlled trials to determine if non-pharmacological interventions can match the cognitive benefits of drug therapy. While both methods demonstrate modest improvements in short-term memory, the findings highlight ME as a promising, effective alternative that avoids the adverse effects often associated with CI. Join us to discuss the implications of these findings for geriatric care, the current limitations in longitudinal data, and how "prescribing" cognitive exercise can empower older women in their AD journey.

### **Efficacy of Spinal Fusion Versus Radiofrequency Ablation for Degenerative Lumbar Spondylolisthesis in the Geriatric Population: A Systematic Review**

*Carlos Chavez Hernandez, Summer Nerkowski, Opemipo Sanyaolu & Dr. TimMarie (Chloe') Williams, University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine*



Degenerative lumbar spondylolisthesis (DLS) is a leading cause of chronic pain in the elderly, yet the choice between invasive fusion and newer, less invasive interventions remains a subject of intense debate. This session presents a systematic review of clinical outcomes for patients aged 65+, challenging the traditional reliance on spinal fusion.

We will analyze data from 21 studies to determine if motion-preserving stabilization can truly match the efficacy of the "gold standard" and investigate the surprising lack of direct evidence for Radiofrequency Ablation (RFA). Join us to bridge the gap between surgical tradition and modern, patient-centered alternatives in geriatric spine care.

---

### **Improving Health and Well-being by Preventing Sexual Violence Against Older Adults Through a Web-Based Ending Violence Across the Lifespan (EVAL) Bystander Training**

*Dr. Michelle Hand, George Mason University*



Pressing needs persist for practitioner trainings on sexual violence (SV) in later life, which bystander

programs have been recommended to address. Yet before this research, no known bystander training on SV in later life existed. Funded by SGS, this study aimed to explore training needs for practitioners who serve older adults or survivors and their recommendations for refining a bystander training to prevent SV in later life, then to pilot the training and evaluate its effectiveness. An interview and focus groups were conducted with 16 practitioners who serve older adults or survivors, and with people ages 50+, whose recommendations were thematically analyzed and used to refine the training. Six themes were identified, surrounding tailored training needs, stereotypes and myths, silent signs of SV in later life, norms that shape stigma, overlapping risk factors, and preference for a virtual training. After integrating the practitioners' recommendations, the training was then piloted with 51 practitioners who serve older adults and survivors. Pre- and post-training, participants were asked the extent to which they believed SV in later life is a problem, their intentions to prevent and address it, and a scenario involving SV in later life was presented, after which participants were asked the extent to which they felt obligated to prevent SV in later life, knowledge on where to report, and if their help was required. Paired samples t-test results demonstrated significant positive changes in awareness of SV in later life, intention and obligation to prevent and address it. Implications will be discussed.

improving Bone Mineral Density (BMD) in postmenopausal women.

Drawing from the latest randomized controlled trials (including data through late 2025), the review highlights the impact of supervised High-Intensity Resistance and Impact Training (HiRIT). Key findings indicate that twice-weekly supervised sessions can increase lumbar spine BMD by approximately 3% over eight months—significantly outperforming standard low-intensity care. The synthesis also explores:

- **Regional Variations:** Why spinal improvements are often more pronounced than changes in hip BMD.
- **Synergistic Effects:** The role of calcium and vitamin D supplementation in maximizing exercise-induced gains.
- **Safety and Longevity:** Evidence confirming the safety of high-intensity protocols and the necessity of long-term consistency (24+ months) for sustained bone health.

Attendees will gain insights into how supervised, high-intensity protocols can be safely integrated into clinical recommendations to combat osteoporosis and improve patient outcomes.

---

## **The Efficacy of Structured High-Intensity Exercise vs. Usual Care on Bone Mineral Density in Postmenopausal Women: A Systematic Review**

*Anjali Aggarwal, Sharise Gant, Abriana Ortega, Mateo Reyes & Dr. TimMarie (Chloe') Williams, University of the Incarnate Word School of Osteopathic Medicine*



As postmenopausal bone loss remains a primary driver of fracture risk, clinical guidelines must evolve to include the most effective physical interventions. This session presents a systematic review evaluating the efficacy of structured, high-intensity exercise versus "usual care" or low-intensity protocols for