



## FOREWORD

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*Guest Editor*

In this 21<sup>st</sup> century, Americans are living longer than ever. Life expectancy has been increasing steadily for the last 50 years. However, the question remains: Does a longer life equate to a more vibrant, fulfilled life?

Great technological advances have been made, yet the public, environmental, and socio-economical health of urban and rural communities is being attacked at sweltering rates. Urban environments are more likely to see large disparities in socioeconomic status, higher rates of crime and violence, the presence of marginalized populations with high risk behaviors (e.g., sex workers), and a higher prevalence of psychological stressors that accompany the increased density and diversity of cities. In rural communities, elders continue to have poorer health outcomes, smoke more, exercise less, have less nutritional diets, and are more likely to be obese than urban residents.

In the midst of the nation's current affairs, there is a body of practitioners, scientists, and community stakeholders who are working tirelessly to support traditional and non-traditional intervention approaches to improve quality of life. Some of these unique approaches have been showcased in this issue of the Jackson State University Mississippi Urban Research Center's *Online Journal of Rural and Urban Research*. We hope you enjoy the peer-reviewed manuscripts and commentaries. It is our intent to bring awareness to critical issues that impact urban and rural communities to support the well-being of all individuals.