



Engaged Aging Lab October Newsletter



Mission Statement

To evaluate the connections among the environment, personal characteristics, and meaningful occupations (how one occupies their time) through a multi-disciplinary lens of translational science. This is conducted through training, advocacy, and research on telehealth/technology, health outcomes, and underlying biology with an emphasis on community-based research and maximizing health resources for all.

Novelty

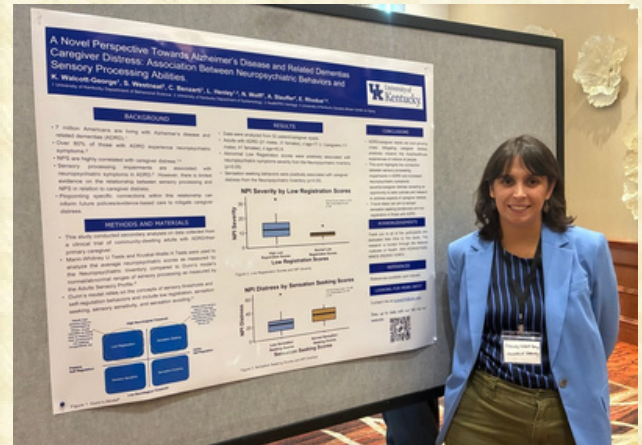
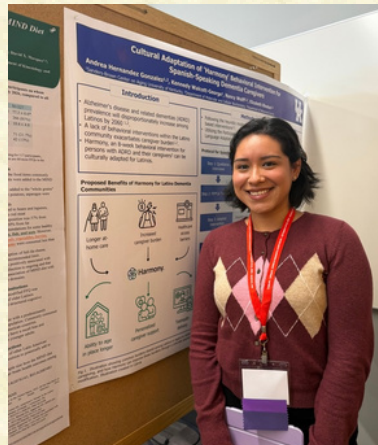
October is breast cancer awareness month! If you're a woman over 40, mammograms are a regular part of your preventative care. But did you know that men can also get breast cancer? Although it's rare, men can inherit the same genes that increase risk of breast cancer in women (BRCA1 and BRCA2 mutations). [This article](#) from the CDC lists out some of the risk factors affecting the development of breast cancer in men, including aging. So whether you're a man or a woman, it's best to contact your primary care provider if you notice any abnormalities in your chest, such as lumps or discharge.

The Kentucky Women's Cancer Screening Program provides free breast and cervical cancer screens to uninsured women across the state. See this link [HERE](#) for locations and details.

Lab News

Last month, lab manager Kennedy Walcott-George (top right) and lab tech Andrea Hernandez (top left) presented some of their research findings at different national conferences! Andrea won the Best Poster Award in the Dementia Care category at her conference!

We also had the chance to sit alongside Dr. Ima Ebong from UK Neurology at the Lexington Latino Festival Health Fair! Here are some pictures from these events:



Sleep

Scientists previously believed that sleep loss in dementia patients was caused by dying neurons or plaque buildup, but researchers at the University of Kentucky (UK) suggest that sleep loss is actually caused by an inflammatory response produced by microglia- the brain's immune cells. UK researchers found that microglia constantly attack plaques in the brain, essentially keeping the brain working all day and night.

After making this discovery, researchers were able to successfully restore NREM (restorative) sleep by up to 2 hours in mice by removing microglia cells from their brain. This means that sleep can be independently targeted and hopefully improve NREM sleep in AD patients. Now, researchers are exploring the use of metabolic drugs to slow down the activity of microglia cells to reduce sleep loss. [Click the link here to read this article.](#)

Photo credits: UK Now



Nutrition

This month, we've got an easy breakfast recipe that is perfect for those chilly fall mornings! If you're a fan of pumpkin and have a sweet tooth, you will love this MIND-Diet inspired Pumpkin Pie Cheesecake Microwave Oatmeal recipe. This meal is full of protein and fiber, which is perfect for keeping you satisfied and full all morning. [Click the link here to view this recipe.](#)

Events and Socialization

Come see us this month at the **North Lexington YMCA Senior Health and Resource Fair!** This event is free and open to the public. See below for details:

Oct 8, 2026 from 10:00am to 1:00pm

381 W. Loudon Avenue, Lexington KY, 40508

A fun way to stay social in October includes pumpkin carving with friends, family or the community! It's also a great way to practice fine motor skills. If you're not a fan of messy pumpkin carving, you could try painting them instead. This year, **Hisle Farm Park** in Lexington is hosting a free **Pumpkin Carving** event. They'll provide pumpkins that you can take home or leave at the farm for display. See below for details:

Oct. 10, 2026 at 10:00am

3551 Briar Hill Road, Lexington KY 40516

[Click here for registration and additional information about the pumpkin carving event at Hisle Farm Park.](#)

Photo credits: MIND Diet Menu Planning Website



Photo credits: Canva

Caregiver Corner

You may be familiar with our body's 5 senses; smell, taste, vision, hearing, and touch. But did you know there are 2 more senses? They don't belong to a specific body part which is why they often get skipped, but they still matter! They are **proprioception** and the **vestibular sense**.

Proprioception is the body's ability to sense its position in space. Receptors in our muscles, tendons, and joints report our body's position and effort to the brain.

The vestibular sense is responsible for our sense of orientation and balance. Tiny structures in our ear respond to the movement of our head and gravity. These senses can become disrupted in people with dementia, but you can help stimulate these systems by doing these fall activities:

Proprioception



Rake leaves into piles,
then hold the bag open
while someone else fills it



Knead bread
dough



Stack firewood on the
porch, or carry small
bundles of kindling in
from the pile

Vestibular



Rock in a platform
rocker or a porch glider



Slow dance to autumn
standards in the kitchen,
with one hand on the
counter



Walk a leaf-covered path
where the footing changes,
with someone beside them

Exercise

A few of the activities we mentioned in the Caregiver Corner section are also perfect for gentle, whole-body movement. Some of these activities may be risky for some people to perform, so make sure you are offering support and a safe environment to perform them. Here are some safety tips:

Spot every transfer

Anything that moves the center of gravity needs a spotter, a stable surface within reach, or both.

Dry days only

Wet leaves are slippery. Clear the path before raking or walking.

Watch for dizziness

If they feel lightheaded on standing, sit them back down and tell their clinician.

Platform rockers

Choose a stable base with supportive arms. Stay close during transfers in and out.

Stop at first nausea

Pallor, nausea, or a request to stop ends the rocking, dancing, or riding immediately.

Check the shoes

Supportive shoes with a back. Not slippers, not socks, not clogs.

Research

We only have a few more spots left in our current research study for caregivers! You may be eligible to receive up to \$200 for your time if you participate. If you, or someone else you know may be a good fit for this study, reach out to us below:

Contact: Elizabeth Rhodus, PhD

Phone: 859-257-5562

Email: EngagedAging@uky.edu

Website: [Engaged Aging Lab Website](#)

OR

Scan the QR Code for study information



Photo credits: Canva

References

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/breast-cancer/about/men.html>
2. <https://www.chfs.ky.gov/agencies/dph/dwh/Pages/cancerscreening.aspx>
3. <https://medicine.uky.edu/sites/research/news/two-hours-sleep-restored-uk-researchers-make-2026-07-20t12-38-20>
4. <https://www.minddietmenuplanning.com/recipe/pumpkin-pie-cheesecake-microwave-oatmeal>
5. <https://www.lexingtonky.gov/calendar/2026-10-10/pumpkin-carving-hisle>