

Ron and Kathy Assaf College of Nursing- Fort Lauderdale

Vanessa Johnson, PhD, RN

Dr. Johnson earned a Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Science in 2004, completed a Clinical Genetics Research Post-Doctoral Fellowship, has taught in Colleges of Nursing for 27 years, served as the PI on several funded studies and as a grant reviewer for various organizations. Dr. Johnson's academic preparation includes: Postdoctoral Fellowship Clinical Genetics Research, University of Iowa (2009-2011); Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) Human Environmental Sciences- Human Development and Family Science Oklahoma State University (2004); Master of Science (MS) Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing – Education University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center (1990); Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Oral Roberts University Anna Vaughn School of Nursing Tulsa, OK(1983).

Dr. Johnson's passionate interest in human development and behavior and a genuine belief in the necessity of empowering underserved and vulnerable community members for positive health outcomes motivates her to use an integrative, interdisciplinary approach to research and teaching. She has taught at the undergraduate and graduate level, in private and public Universities for over 28 years. The primary areas in which she has taught include Research and Evidence Based Practice, Psychosocial Nursing, Population Health, and Issues in Minority Health. She has also served on thesis and dissertation committees.

Dr. Johnson has a passionate interest in the psychological aspects of human development and behavior. This commitment to addressing the psychological aspects of human development and behavior, coupled with her desire to comprehend and facilitate health equality among underrepresented populations, led her to study epigenetic modifiers. Her epigenomics research began with studying strategies for facilitating early diagnosis of Fragile X Syndrome (FXS). FXS is caused by changes in the FMR1 Gene. The gene changes are manifested as a multi-systemic complex of neuropsychiatric disorders across the lifespan. Her beginning research, funded in part by a 2002 National Fragile X Foundation Research Award, included a mixed methods study in which she collected buccal cell samples to test for FMR1 Gene mutations at the Sherman laboratory located at Emory University School of Medicine. However, the study revealed meager participation of African-Americans and Native Americans (Johnson et al., 2013). Dr. Johnson has served as the principal investigator for numerous subsequent studies. Additionally, she has served as an investigator for other funded research projects and has widely published and presented her research findings.

Additional activities include Dr. Johnson's membership on various related boards and taskforces. She is frequently invited to serve as a grants proposal reviewer for federal and private entities. Dr. Johnson holds a genuine belief in the necessity of empowering community members for positive health outcomes and the integration of biological and behavioral sciences to address to promote and improve the health of individuals, families, communities, and populations.