

THE NAACP AND YOU!



Rev. Jesse D. Scott
President
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This week's column, submitted by the NAACP, is reprinted from the Sunday, April 5, 1987 issue of the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

Health

The link between race and hypertension

By Dolly Katz
Knight-Ridder News Service

ATLANTA — John Henry, the legendary black folk hero, died trying to lay steel track faster than a machine.

Some scientists believe the same attitude is killing American blacks by raising their blood pressure to lethal levels.

As one example, a black American doctor develops high blood pressure at a rate triple that of his white colleagues, according to a 25-year study of almost 1,000 medical school graduates.

The finding is being used to bolster one side in a long-standing debate over the

cause of hypertension, a leading killer of American blacks.

Some researchers believe that one overlooked cause of the stress of living and trying to succeed in a racist, white-dominated society. That stress apparently is so great that it affects even those blacks at the top of the socioeconomic ladder.

"If this were a black-dominated society and whites were being treated the same way, you would probably see the reverse," said Dr. James Carter, director of the family practice residency program at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta.

Carter was one of some 500 scientists from around the world who met in Atlanta last week at the Second International Conference on Hypertension in Blacks, to investigate why blacks suffer disproportionately from high blood pressure and what can be done about it.

High blood pressure causes heart attacks, stroke and kidney failure. With treatment, which includes drugs and diet and life-style changes, complications can be greatly reduced. The nation's death rate from hypertension-related diseases has, in fact, been dropping, and blacks have shared in that improvement. Since 1972, the death rate from heart disease, the nation's number one killer, has declined more than a third.

But high blood pressure still occurs twice as frequently in blacks than in Whites, and is more often fatal in blacks. If black death rates from hypertension-related diseases were the same as whites', some 18,000 fewer blacks would die annually. Scientists have identified many factors in the development of high blood pressure — obesity, cigarette smoking, alcohol, diet, lack of exercise. Salt can raise blood pressure, and many researchers believe that American blacks share certain genetic traits that make them more

susceptible to the American high-salt diet.

But all those factors together can't explain all the difference in high blood pressure rates between blacks and whites.

"If you crank in the known things, like smoking, obesity, family history, there's always a hunk of the variance left," said William Naser, an epidemiologist at Meharry Medical College in Nashville. "That's why stress continues to seem to hold water — because there's no other way to explain it."

Naser was one of the authors of the study that followed black Meharry graduates and white Johns Hopkins University medical school graduates.

The idea that chronic stress can raise blood pressure was first advanced in the early 1970s by Ernest Harburg, a University of Michigan sociologist who found that people living in low-income, high-crime areas had higher blood pressures than people living in safer neighborhoods, and that blacks in the stressful neighborhoods had the highest blood pressures of all.

Recently, a University of North Carolina psychologist has taken the idea a step further with his concept of "John Henryism" — the black attitude that people can succeed despite the odds by dint of hard work and patience.

In personality tests that he developed, Sherman James discovered that poor black men who were extremely patient, who suppressed their anger and who believed in the struggle for success had the highest blood pressures.

But the study of high blood pressure in doctors suggests that even those at the top of the socioeconomic ladder may not be immune, Naser said. Black doctors, he noted, may face additional stresses that don't affect their white colleagues.

"A number of these guys

MAY IS JAZZ MONTH

May is Jazz Month in Las Vegas, and in celebration, Jazz will be heard citywide, with concerts by Joe Williams, Les McCann, Carl Fontana, and others. Jazz Month will kick off May 3 with a Jazz Brunch, noon to 3 p.m. at the Allied Arts Gallery featuring vocalist Edie Aikels and her husband Rudy, on bass. The Allied Arts Council and the City of Las Vegas have dedicated Jazz Month 1987 to the Jazz Section of the Czechoslovakian Musicians Union and their struggle for artistic and cultural freedom. For information call the Council at 731-5419.

Air Show 87 at Nellis Sunday

The "Wings of Freedom-Air Show 87" will be held Sunday May 3 here, with

practice in somewhat isolated circumstances, which is stressful," he said. In addition, they may have difficulty practicing in their preferred location and speciality, and trouble getting on hospital staffs, he suggested.

"I believe they're under additional pressure to excel," he added.

But many other researchers are uncomfortable with the concept of racism-induced stress as a cause of high blood pressure.

"I'm not a great believer in that," said Dr. O.O. Akinkugbe, professor of medicine at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria. He noted that "John Henryism" is not a major problem in most of Africa, but high blood pressure is, particularly among blacks who migrate to cities from rural areas.

"I would prefer to concentrate on the physical and environmental area — lifestyle, change in diet, things like that," he said.

"Stress is a very nebulous entity. And what may be stressful to a particular culture may not be stressful to another."

Other studies suggest that a John Henry theory may not be necessary to explain the effects of racism on high blood pressure. Racism produces poverty, unemployment and poor education, all of which have a devastating effect on blood pressure control.

gates opening for the public at 9 a.m.

Featured on the Nellis flightline will be such aircraft as the B-52 Stratofortress, KC-10 Extender, C-5 Galaxy, C-130 Hercules, F-111, F-4G, T-37, T-38, and F-15. Approximately 40 aircraft will be on display. Also on the flightline will be the UH-1, HH-53, and H-60 helicopters.

Armed Forces Day will be observed as part of the day's ceremonies along with commemorating the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution.

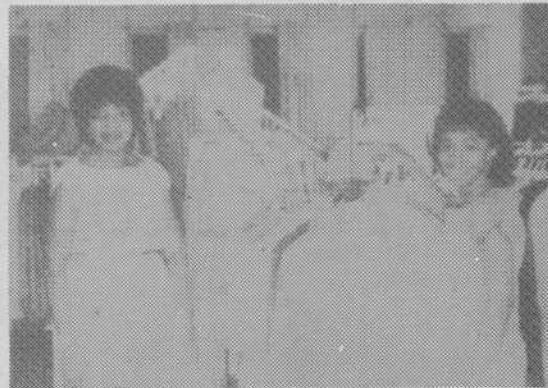
To highlight the days events, the U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron Thunderbirds will perform their precision aerial maneuvers in their red, white, and blue F-16 Fighting Falcons beginning at 2:30 p.m.

This and many other events will be available at the "Wings of Freedom-Air Show 87", designed to have something for the entire family.

Admission and parking for the air show are free. Base officials remind the public that alcoholic beverages will not be permitted to be brought on base. Also as a reminder, leave yourself plenty of time to arrive before the aerial demonstrations begin at 11 a.m.

The Nellis Air Force Base community looks forward to hosting its friends and neighbors to see "their" Air Force in action.

Information signs and traffic sentries will direct traffic to the air show entrance gate.



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PRELIMINARY COMPATIBILITY SCREENING—

1. I am easily irritated when required to stand in line.
2. My level of refinement is average.
3. Off-color language is embarrassing.
4. Perfection is often just an accident.
5. Most people would consider me unsophisticated.
6. I dislike having to get dressed up to go out.
7. Early hotel check-out times are annoying.
8. People place too much emphasis on sex these days.
9. Moral values are lower now than ever before.
10. Love and commitment should precede sex.