

# HEALTH

# HEALTH BRIEFS

## HHS NEWS

### SIX MINORITY FOCUSED RESEARCH CENTERS ESTABLISHED

HHS Secretary Louis W. Sullivan, M.D., recently announced the establishment of six federally funded research centers in New York, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Albuquerque and Honolulu to increase research efforts to prevent, diagnose, treat and manage illnesses among minority populations. Funding for the centers includes over \$3 million for the first year, with an overall commitment of more than \$19 million over the next five years.

A principal focus of the centers' efforts will be on "outcomes" research. This involves study of variations in treatment for specific diseases and conditions to determine what treatments are most effective and are most likely to lead to favorable patient outcomes. The Agency for Health Care Policy and Research, which provided funds for the centers, is leading HHS' effort to improve the effectiveness of medical treatment and reduce or eliminate ineffective or inappropriate care.

"As a whole, the nation's minorities have higher rates of heart disease, hypertension and many other diseases than whites," Dr. Sullivan said. "These problems are complicated by cultural and other factors often unique to a specific group."

Among the health problems particularly affecting minorities, diabetes is 33 percent more common among African Americans than whites. Certain American Indian tribes have the highest known prevalence of type II diabetes, a non-insulin-dependent form of the disease.

AIDS affects proportionately more African Americans and Hispanics than it does whites, and the rates are increasing. Among Hispanic women, the AIDS rate is eight times higher than among non-Hispanic women, and their children are six times more likely to be HIV-infected.

There are a growing number of cancer cases among Asians and Pacific Islanders—at least a

third higher than among whites. In some Asian communities, tuberculosis is 40 times higher than in the general population, particularly for those persons 45 and older.

"Ways of effectively preventing, managing or treating conditions in the general population often do not work as well for specific minority groups," Dr. Sullivan said. He charged the minority research centers with understanding the particular needs and disparities in health status among different minority groups in order to mold successful, effective approaches.

According to AHCPR Administrator J. Jarrett Clinton, M.D., the centers will be staffed by clinical practitioners, epidemiologists, sociologists, economists and other professionals. The centers will produce and distribute health information for consumers and policymakers, in addition to conducting research and providing training for minority investigators interested in performing outcomes research. They are part of AHCPR's Medical Effectiveness Treatment Program (MEDTEP), which includes outcomes research, development of clinical practice guidelines, and widespread dissemination of research findings and practice guidelines to health care practitioners and consumers.

The MEDTEP Research Centers on Minority Populations are expected to result in an increase in the numbers of minority health services researchers. They also will increase participation by minority researchers in grant and contract activities supported by the Public Health Service, the Health Care Financing Administration and private funding sources. New research findings will help in the development of appropriate clinical strategies that provide the most effective care for minority populations.

For more information on the research centers call (301) 227-8370.

### ARTHRITIS FOUNDATION OFFERS MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUPS

The Rheumatoid Arthritis Support Group, sponsored by the Arthritis Foundation, meets the third Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be held 7-8:30 p.m., September 21 in the conference room at the Special Children's Clinic, 1161 South Valley View.

The Arthritis Foundation also sponsors a monthly general support group for those affected by arthritis.

Call the Arthritis Foundation at 367-1626 for additional information about the support groups or other services available.

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The Clark County Health District is searching for persons who are able to serve as loving and supportive friends of patients and families experiencing terminal illness. These persons will serve as volunteers in the Health District Hospice Program.

Thirty (30) hours of training are provided for volunteers at the Clark County Health District. Additional training in special areas is also available. An application and personal interview are required prior to training.

Please read the following detailed information. If you think you can fill this very special calling, contact Edie Blanchard, Coordinator of Volunteer Services, Clark County Health District, 625 Shadow Lane, Las

Vegas - 383-1341.

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### HOSPICE TRAINING RECRUITMENT

The Clark County Health District Hospice Program is looking for volunteers who are able to provide emotional support and assistance to terminally ill patients and their families.

Volunteers should be available 3-5 hours each week, be at least 18 years of age, and have their own transportation.

Extensive training will be provided at the Clark County Health District, beginning in September.

For more information or application, contact Edie Blanchard, coordinator of volunteer services, at 383-1341.

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### HEART VOLUNTEERS HELP SHOPPERS REDUCE FAT DURING FOOD FESTIVAL

During its eighth annual Food Festival, September 19-25, the American Heart Association provides helpful information on reducing the intake of dietary fat, particularly saturated fat, and cholesterol.

On Sat., Sept. 19, AHA 'Fat-O-Stat' activity centers at four participating supermarkets are offering a 20-question quiz so that shoppers can determine eating habits which add fat to their diet.

"There are many hidden sources of fat and cholesterol in our diets," according to Michael Mayes, Chairman of the Las

Vegas Valley Division of the American Heart Association. "During AHA's Food Festival, we can help people check their diets to turn down their 'Fat-O-Stats'."

A free Heart Healthy Food Chart will be presented to everyone who completes a "Fat-O-Stats" pledge card. For more information call 792-4881.

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### SPECIAL CPR CLASSES

CPR-FIRST AID TRAINING INSTITUTE will teach a course called "Home Alone: How Do You Handle An Emergency?" designed for parents of newborns and toddlers. The class will include information of rescue breathing, choking, and child and infant CPR. An American Heart Association CPR card will be given to those who complete the course.

A Senior Citizen CPR class will be taught the last Wednesday of each month from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The course will cover the Signs and Signals of a Heart Attack, Signs and Symptoms of a Stroke, Rescue Breathing, Choking, and Adult CPR. Senior Citizens, 55 and older, will be given a 25% discount; the cost is \$9.00, including cost of book, breathing shields, and AHA cards. The first Senior Citizen CPR class is September 30, 1992.

CPR-FIRST AID TRAINING INSTITUTE has also developed a special course for babysitters. The class, for boys and girls (11-18 years old), teaches safety, child and infant CPR and "basic" do's and don'ts of babysitting. Each student will receive an AHA CPR card and a "Babysitting" Certificate. The course will be held the second Saturday of each month from 9 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. The cost is \$17.00 and includes all teaching materials.

Anyone wishing any more information or wanting to register for a class should call Kenneth Glover or W.K. Vandygriff at 876-9177.

# SICKLE CELL DISEASE

By Cam Freedlund,  
Blue Cross of California  
News Service

Sickle cell anemia strikes one in every 500 African Americans, according to the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease (NASCD). One in 12 African Americans has sickle cell trait.

Normally, red blood cells are round. But in some individuals, the cells change to an abnormal sickle shape when they release oxygens. While sickled cells function essentially the same as normal cells, there are two distinct differences, writes Dr. Charles F. Whitten, former president of the NASCD board of

directors.

First, sickled cells travel through the blood vessels differently. They are hard like pieces of wood. Combined with their shape, sickled cells occasionally jam up and block the flow of blood. Second, sickled cells are more fragile than normal cells. Healthy red cells live about 129 days while sickled cells live only 5 to 30 days. These two differences usually result in blocked blood vessels or anemia out of

which most complications of sickle cell disease arise, says Dr. Whitten.

Sickle cell trait is a condition inherited from at least one parent, according to the NASCD. There are no sickle-shape cells and no symptoms which accompany sickle cell trait. It can, however, increase the chances of your child having sickle cell anemia.

"It is important for all African Americans to be tested for sickle

cell anemia and trait, especially persons of childbearing age," according to Lynda K. Anderson, Executive Director of the NASCD. "If the test results are positive, further counseling should be obtained," Anderson continues.

With appropriate treatment and counseling, most people can lead satisfactory lives. For more information, call the National Association for Sickle Cell Disease, Inc., at (800)421-8453.

(Note: September is National Sickle Cell Month)

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