

# WHY HEALTH CARE REFORM IS IMPORTANT TO THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY

By Walter D. Broadnax, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Services

"When America catches a cold, the Black community gets pneumonia." The kernel of truth in that old saying is magnified in the current debate about health care reform. You could say when America's health care system is due for major surgery, health care for African-Americans is in the intensive care ward.

The truth is, every major health care problem facing this nation is exacerbated in Black America. From TB to teen preg-

nancy. From violence to AIDS. From too many babies dying to too many senior citizens not having enough to eat.

And in the face of these exploding health problems, African-Americans are less likely to have health benefits.

Currently, over 20 percent of African-Americans have no health insurance coverage at all. And many who do are one pink slip away from disaster.

Losing or changing jobs often means losing your health insurance.

Becoming ill or having a

chronic medical condition too often means losing coverage, or not being able to obtain it in the first place.

And when so many Americans have inadequate health insurance, or no coverage at all, clinics get overcrowded, and emergency rooms serve as waiting rooms of last resort for

people who can't get care any other way.

Clearly, Black America has a bad case of the health care blues. And clearly, we have a vital stake in reform.

The centerpiece of President Clinton's Health Security Plan is our commitment to provide health care security to every

single American.

The Clinton plan says: Switch jobs or start your own business — you'll still be covered.

Lose your job — you'll still be covered.

Get sick — you'll still be covered. And you won't be penalized with skyrocketing pre- (See Health Reform, Page 21)



Walter D. Broadnax

## HEALTH

### MINORITY HEALTH SHOWS SLOW IMPROVEMENT

Minority health is improving overall, but not fast enough to close the health gap, says HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala.

In fact, the gap in health status between minorities and non-minorities is actually getting wider in many categories, and it points to the need for health care reform, Secretary Shalala says.

The statistics are included in Health, United States, 1992, the government's latest annual report cared on the nation's health. Secretary Shalala released the report Sept. 15.

"Where could you find a better argument for health reform than in the sharp differences in health by income, race and education?" Secretary Shalala said. "Many Americans can't afford or can't obtain the care they need to prevent illness and maintain good health. It's unfair to our citizens, and unwise as a nation, to fail to deliver basic services because of an individual's ability to pay or a family's health insurance cover-

age."

According to the U.S. Census Current Population survey, some 21 percent of blacks and 32 percent of Hispanics were uninsured in 1991, compared with 11 percent of white non-Hispanics.

An estimated 37 million Americans have no health insurance, up from 31 million in 1987.

Secretary Shalala said health care reform could provide universal coverage for all Americans. She said the report also points to the importance of poverty, education and healthy behaviors choices in determining health status.

Findings in the report shows:

\* Life expectancy at birth increased almost two years in the past decade and now stands at 75.5 years for the average American. For whites the average is 76.3 (79.6 for women, 72.9 for men). For blacks the average is 69.3 (73.8 for women, 64.6 for men). For all other races the average is 71.5, 75.5 for women, 67.3 for men).

\* Homicide rates have increases since the mid 80's, reflecting the rise in firearm-related mortality. The firearm death rate in 1990 was highest for those 15-24 years of age. The rate increased more for this age

group than any other, up 50 percent from 1985 to 1990.

Overall in this age group the death rate per 100,000 was 17.2; but for blacks it was 68; and for Hispanics, 27.5.

Provisional data for 1991 show the homicide rate still rising and homicide was ranked as the 10th leading cause of death for all Americans in 1991.

\* Although overall provisional infant mortality reached a record low in 1992 of 8.5 per 1,000 live births, several important indicators of maternal and child health also showed setbacks or no improvement during the 1980's.

(See Minority Health, Pg 22)

### EAT HEALTHY AND STAY TRUE TO YOUR HERITAGE

HOUSTON — This Christmas, black Americans can eat healthy and stay true to their African-American heritage.

"People tend to overindulge in food and drink during the holidays, increasing their risk for

high blood pressure," said Dr. Addison Taylor, a professor of medicine and chief of the hypertension section at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

But many families who celebrate the African holiday, Kwan-

zaa, opt for fresh, naturally seasoned foods derived from many African cultures. Kwanzaa is a seven-day ritual to celebrate the year's first harvest and reinforce family values.

Eating a Kwanzaa meal consisting of low-fat, high-fiber foods like brown rice, fruit, vegetables and fish prepared without salt is a good way to avoid high blood pressure and other problems in the long run.

A high-salt diet is a major risk factor for high blood pressure, or hypertension. Studies have shown that many blacks suffer from salt-sensitive hypertension as a result of eating traditional "soul foods" such as sweet potato pie, greens with salt pork, combread and ham.

If Kwanzaa is not for you, Taylor suggests preparing traditional holiday foods that are "heart-friendly."

"Fried foods, fatty meats and dairy products like butter can aggravate high blood pressure," said Taylor, who is also an investigator at Baylor's Heart Center. "Lower your salt intake and use margarine, lemon and herbs instead of oil and butter."

According to the American Heart Association, one out of (See Eat Healthy, Page 22)

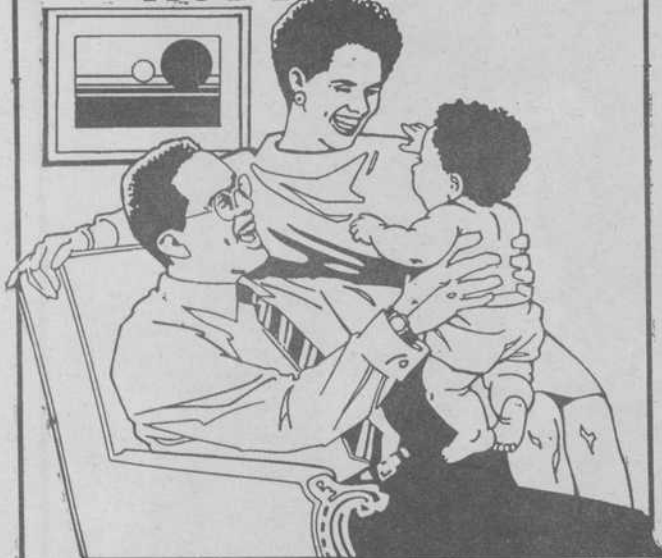
### GIVE A GIFT OF LOVE

Stumped about what to get that person who has everything! not anymore. Give the Gift of Love. Give the Gift of Life. Give a CPR Gift Certificate this holiday and support the Nevada Black Chamber of Commerce!!!

CPR-FIRST AID TRAINING is offering both a \$15.00 CPR Gift Certificate and a \$25.00 CPR-First Aid Gift Certificate which is good for seminars taught during the entire year of 1994, January 1 - December 31, 1994. The gift certificates which come in their own holiday envelopes are ready to place in any Christmas stocking!!! This is an ideal gift for loved ones, friends or employees. You can now afford to give the entire staff "a little something for the holiday."

And even more good news. A dollar (\$1.00) from each \$15.00 Gift Certificate and three dollars (\$3.00) from each \$25.00 Gift Certificate sold goes to the Nevada Black Chamber of Commerce. In addition \$1.00 from each Gift Certificate sold will also go to the Nevada affiliate of the American Heart Association for Research and Education. Just think of it as the gift that keeps on giving!! Call now to order your Holiday Gift Certificate!! (702) 876-9177.

### YOUR GRANDCHILDREN SHOULD BE SEEN, NOT BLURRED.



— NEW PATIENTS —

Call Today For A Vision Evaluation

**TYREE CARR, M.D., Ltd**  
Ophthalmology and Ophthalmic Surgery  
Diplomate American Board of Ophthalmology

- Cataract Implant Surgery (no stitch)
- Refractive Surgery
- Laser Surgery and Glaucoma Treatment
- Cosmetic Eye Surgery

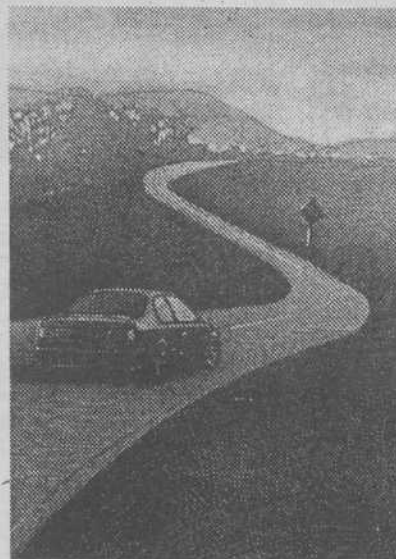
• Most Insurance Plans and Medicare Assignment Accepted  
Complete Medicare certified, nationally accredited  
Surgery Center at West Charleston location

2316 W. Charleston, Suite 120  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89102  
(702) 258-8128

1703 Civic Center, Suite 2  
N. Las Vegas, Nevada 89030  
(702) 642-7952

Se Habla Español

### CANCER TREATMENTS WORK BETTER THAN EVER. THEY JUST DON'T WORK FROM 50 MILES AWAY.



Through the American Cancer Society's Road to Recovery program, you can volunteer to drive a cancer patient to and from treatment.

For more information, please call your American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345. Call today. And help bring a cancer patient closer to a cure.



THERE'S NOTHING MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD