

HEALTHWIRE

PREVENTION & ACCESS: IMPROVING CARIBBEAN HEALTH IN THE U.S.A.

PART II

The Impact of the Clinton Plan

The problem of access to care has led Dr. Stone to worry about some aspects of the Clinton health reform package. For example, if the plan is approved in its present form, undocumented immigrants now eligible for health services at New York

City-owned hospitals would be cut off from care if they can't pay for it. "A lack of coverage for the undocumented really worries us," asserts Ms. Colin.

Another area of concern affected by the Clinton plan is the supply of doctors. With the current plan, many inner-city hospitals like Metropolitan and Inter-

faith, which rely on foreign-trained physicians to provide service, would be discouraged from using them, relying instead on American-trained doctors. By forcing hospitals to drop foreign-trained doctors, says Dr. Stone the, Caribbean immigrants would be denied treatment by professionals who are culturally in tune

with them. The absence of those physicians may also limit research into diseases which are prevalent among Caribbean immigrants.

One benefit of the reforms would be the coverage it would offer to the millions of permanent legal residents who can't afford insurance. "For them, the Clinton proposals would be an advantage," says Dr. Marco Mason, an immigration specialist. Under the Clinton plan they would be included in the proposed "universal coverage."

But as the debate over health care reform continues, institutions like Metropolitan and Inter-

faith are tailoring their services to help immigrants with cultural differences. Interfaith, for example, sought the help of the Caribbean Women's Health Association to conduct cultural awareness sessions for many of its staff so that they would understand the "folk ways" of the Caribbean.

The Haitian Foundation is also planning a clinic which would help to provide care for the 100,000-200,000 Haitians in Miami. "We feel we must provide the services in a setting that would make Haitians feel comfortable," says Ms. Colin.

CWHA is also optimistic that

their planned expansion of services will help to slash central Brooklyn's infant mortality rates which are higher than those of some Caribbean nations. "We think we can make a difference," says Ms. Graham, a Jamaican.

Tony Best is a Caribbean journalist living in New York City.

HealthWire is produced and distributed by the Minority Media Information Center (MMIC) a program of the Scientists' Institute for Public Information (SIPI). SIPI is a national non-profit organization that serves as a bridge between the science community and media.

HEALTH

OVERWEIGHT TEENS DO NOT REALIZE HEALTH RISK

Many overweight African American teenagers do not realize obesity is a health risk, says a behavioral psychologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"They know they have a weight problem, but don't think about the health consequences," said Dr. John Foreyt, a professor of medicine at Baylor.

Misperceptions about obesity differ greatly among black and white teenagers. Studies show that 40 percent of obese African American females and 36 percent of the males perceived themselves as healthy, compared to nearly 100 percent and 78 percent of obese white females and males, respectively.

Adolescence is a critical time of adult obesity development for many African American teens. Eighty percent of obese teenagers are likely to grow into

overweight adults, especially women. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, 44 percent of black women are overweight by the time they reach their 20's.

Although socioeconomic and cultural factors are possible contributors, Foreyt says many young people are not educated about the dangers of being overweight.

"Teens should be taught that if they do not control their weight, they run a greater risk for heart disease, diabetes and other life-threatening diseases," said Foreyt, who is also director of Baylor's Nutrition Research Clinic.

In some cases, teenagers inherit their weight problem. Although obesity can run in families, Foreyt says teenagers should not give into fate.

"Parents with a family history

MMIC SPEAKER PROGRAM DESIGNED TO BRING EXPERTS TO JOURNALISTS

African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and Native Americans suffer more often from diabetes, heart disease, lupus, asthma, environmental hazards and have higher mortality rates from these conditions than any other group in America. The even greater tragedy is that many of these deaths can be prevented with proper intervention and treatment.

While these problems cannot be solved overnight, information about prevention and the importance of access to culturally sensitive health care can make a significant difference. Consequently, The Scientists' Institute for Public Information's Minority Media Information Center (MMIC) is making a diverse range of experts on public health, social science, environmental racism and other health and science issues available to broadcast and print media that reach minority audiences.

The MMIC Speakers Bureau is a free resource for broadcast and print journalists who want to give their audiences access to experts who can offer analysis and insight on issues that can

make a difference in peoples' lives. Topics include: Health Care Reform: Will it Serve The Underserved? - Do Genetics and Culture Play a Role in Hypertension? - Puerto Rican and African American Children Die from Asthma at Four Times the Rate of White Children: What Can Be Done? - Genetic Research: Fuel for Racism or Medicine's Promising New Frontier?

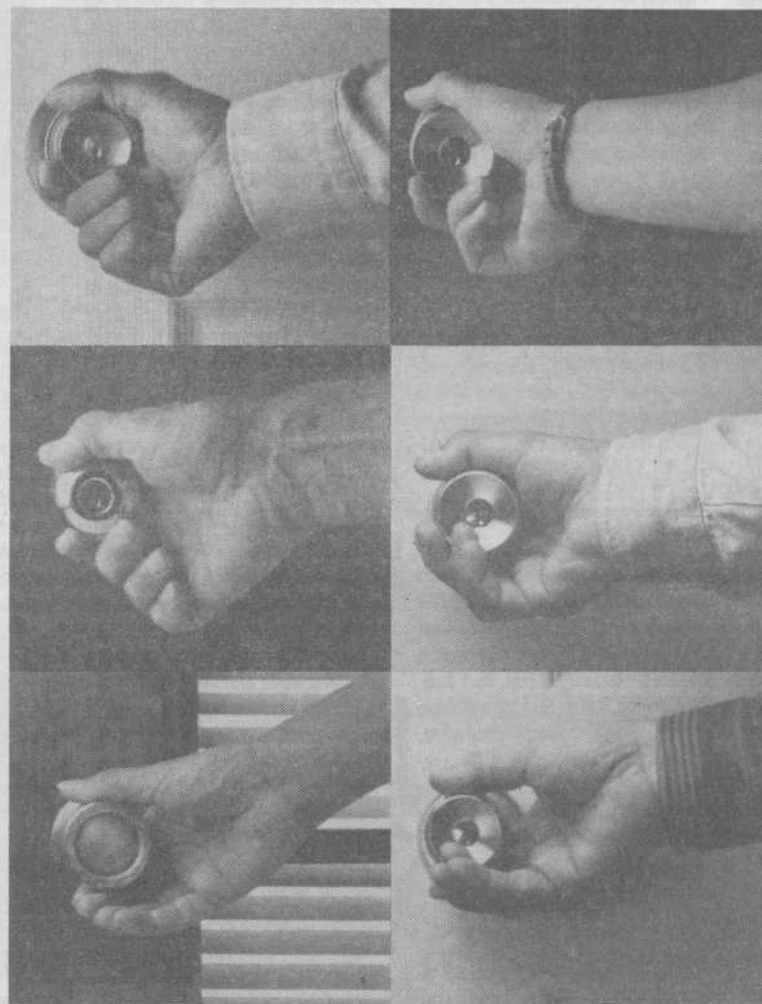
MMIC speakers can address these questions and many more for professional journalists' organizations or broadcast audiences. All speaker travel and lodging costs will be covered by the MMIC.

The Scientists' Institute for Public Information is a non-profit, non-advocacy organization that has been providing information for journalists covering health and science issues for more than 20 years.

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of obesity should tell their teenagers to be extremely cautious (See Overweight, Page 21)



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