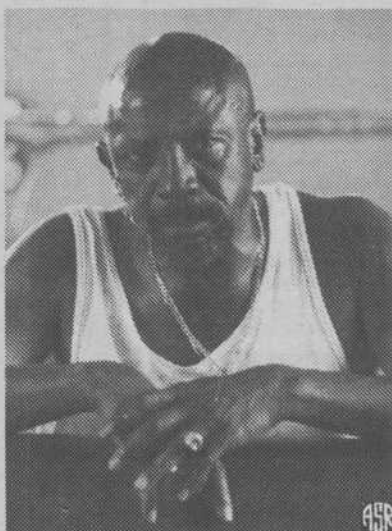


## Matters of the Heart

by Louis Gossett, Jr.

I've been fortunate enough to make a wonderful living as an actor, but I could have embarked on a very different career. Let's just say that right now, Patrick Ewing could be chasing a 20-year-old New York Knicks scoring record set by "Legend" Lou Gossett, Jr.!



Louis Gossett, Jr.

Of course, I never played a minute in the NBA. I did play ball for New York University—on a basketball/drama scholarship—and I was invited to try out for the Knicks. I reported to the team even though I had already performed in several plays. A couple of elbows to the mouth under the basket convinced me that Broadway was the way to go. I wasn't hungry enough for pro basketball and I certainly wasn't hungry enough to eat elbows, so acting was my best option.

I didn't think about my health back in those days. It was easy to stay fit then, but now I have to pay much more attention to my body. I went back into the gym a few years ago, because some physically demanding acting roles called for me to be in good shape.

It wasn't as easy as it used to be. To play boxer "Honey" Roy Palmer opposite James Woods in the movie "Diggstown," I lost more than 35 pounds while training six hours a day, six days a week for 16 weeks. I even went on a special diet that consisted of little solid food and high quantities of vitamins.

But as you get older, working out is not enough. Your body needs preventive maintenance. That means finding the time to see a doctor and take some tests to check things out.

This is especially true if you're an African-American. Did you know, for example, that African-Americans suffer about twice as many strokes as Caucasians? That African-Americans have a higher risk of dying from stroke than any other ethnic group in America?

A major cause of stroke, high blood pressure (hypertension), is very common among African-Americans. Another cause of stroke, but one you may not have heard much about, is a heart condition called atrial fibrillation, or AF. AF is an irregular heartbeat that may produce blood clots that can cause a stroke. It affects more than one million Americans, perhaps as many as nine percent of Americans over age 65. Some 75,000 strokes occur each year as a result of AF.

You can have AF and not know it, but fortunately, the condition may be managed successfully. First, though, you need to find out if you have AF, and that means seeing a doctor. Getting tested for AF is simple and it can reduce your risk of stroke.

Because African-Americans are at the highest risk for stroke, it makes sense to get tested for AF. I know you want to stay healthy, and you may even exercise, but I'll give you the same type of response that Sergeant Foley gave Zack Mayo in "An Officer and a Gentleman." "My grandmama wants to stay healthy!"

In other words, it takes more than just wanting to. You have to make an all-out commitment to your health. I'm committed to stroke prevention, and that's why you'll see me on television and hear me on the radio talking about AF and stroke. It's all part of my newest role as a spokesperson for the Atrial Fibrillation Partners in Prevention program.

I pride myself on putting my heart and soul into every part I play, but this one is especially important to me. So see a doctor to reduce your risk of stroke, for yourself, your family and your friends.

To find out more about AF, call the AF Hotline toll-free at 1-800-4AF-1825. You'll receive a brochure that describes exactly what AF is, who may be affected by it, possible symptoms, the risks involved, and treatment options. You can also get information about finding a doctor in your area if you don't have one.

## MEDICARE PAYS FOR FLU SHOTS

It's no fun to get the flu. You feel awful, you have a fever, a cough, a sore throat, a "runny" nose, and muscle aches. And much more than just feeling lousy, flu and pneumonia together are the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, and the elderly are especially vulnerable.

If you are 65, Medicare will now pay for you to get your flu and pneumonia vaccines. Medicare Pays for Flu Shots (Item 630A, free), a new

pamphlet from Health Care Financing Administration, explains how this works. Written in an easy Q & A format, the pamphlet tells you how to use your Medicare benefits to pay for your shots, including when and where to get them. To order a free copy, write to the Consumer Information Center, Dept. 630A, Pueblo, Colorado 81009.

The Public health Service recommends that you get the flu shot every year if you are age 65

and over. Even if you have had the flu, you need to protect yourself against each year's new strain. And, the best time to get your shot is in the fall — just before the flu season starts. The Public Health Service also recommends that everyone 65 and over get pneumonia shots. However, unlike the flu shot, one pneumonia shot should protect you for a lifetime.

When you write for your copy of Medicare Pays for Flu Shots (See Flu Shots, Page 23)

# HEALTH

## AMERICAN DIABETES ASSOCIATION VOLUNTEERS BEGIN CONTACTING NEIGHBORS FOR THE "NEIGHBORHOOD CHECK FOR DIABETES" CAMPAIGN

*Campaign Helps Neighbors Assess Risk of Diabetes, Encourages neighbors to Donate*

An estimated 1000 volunteers for the American Diabetes Association will begin contacting their neighbors this month by mail to encourage them to take a test to find out if they

are at risk for diabetes and make a small contribution to benefit diabetes research and treatment.

Neighbors in communities all across Nevada will receive a small packet from the Association's volunteer "blockworkers" that contains a

diabetes risk test, a brief letter and return envelopes for donations. Debbie Davald, Executive Director said, "The goal of Neighborhood Check is two-fold. First, this program encourages people to check their own risk of diabetes by taking a simple test, and seek medical advice if they are at risk. Second, it encourages them to write a check to help the Association continue its fight against diabetes."

Nationwide, the Association plans to reach more than 11 million households through Neighborhood Check and raise more than \$9.2 million. Last year in Nevada, the campaign raised more than \$14,000.

According to the Association, nearly 14 million Americans have diabetes, but half of these people (See Diabetes, Page 23)

## HEALTH BRIEFS

### LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR MINORITIES

Minority college students interested in pursuing medical degrees may apply for the Honors Pre-Medical Academy, a six-week summer program at Baylor College of Medicine and Rice University, both in Houston.

The national program, funded in part by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is designed to increase minority representation in medicine by enhancing participants' competitiveness in the application pool.

Participants must be black, Mexican-American, mainland

Puerto Rican or a member of one the indigenous American peoples.

Participants spend time in medical settings paired with physicians and in Rice science and communications classes.

Additional information is available by calling 1-800-633-6445.

### FREE BROCHURE ON CHILDHOOD ACCIDENT PREVENTION

Tips on child held safety are contained in a free brochure entitled "Accident Prevention: A Family Guide to Child Safety," published by Baylor College of (See Health Briefs, Page 23)

## ASTHMA SUPPORT GROUP

Parents/Families of Asthmatics Support Group will meet Tuesday, October 18, 1994 at 7:00 p.m. at the Rehabilitation Hospital of Nevada, Las Vegas, 1250 S. Valley View.

Babysitting and refreshments will be available. Please call 644-8202 for more details.

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