

HEALTH

Coordinated efforts needed to address cancer

By Donna E. Shalala
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Few diseases strike as much fear in the hearts of people as cancer. Cancer strikes the African-American community far too often, rich and poor and young and old - even star athletes like Baltimore Orioles outfielder Eric Davis.

The disproportionate impact of cancer in African-Americans reminds me of an old adage I have heard from African-American leaders - "when America catches a cold, Black America catches pneumonia."

At the Department of Health and Human Services, our objective is to find a way to prove that adage wrong. We made a public commitment to that goal recently, at the Sixth Symposium on Minorities, the Medically Underserved and Cancer held in Washington.

Eliminating racial health disparities means more than making sure we have the best scientists and the best medical facilities and equipment. Just as important is how well we utilize our resources to address some of the toughest issues in

health and medicine, including cancer's uneven burden on African-Americans and other minority populations.

That explains why we opened the Office of Special Populations at NCI one year ago. Because research is hugely important in the war on cancer, the new Office of Special Populations has been charged with leading and coordinating cancer research as it relates to minorities. One way we'll measure its progress is how well the office helps develop new clinical, epidemiological and biological opportunities for research.

The Office of Special Populations is designing strategies to attract more African-American participation in cancer prevention and screening trials. And the office is helping to shape and direct cancer science so that we can pinpoint why a young African-American like Eric Davis would develop colon cancer in his youth and strength; why the prostate cancer incidence rate is some 35 percent higher for black males than for white males; or

why African-American women have a higher breast cancer mortality rate than white women.

One of the most talented and knowledgeable African-Americans in the cancer field, Dr. Otis Brawley has devoted a career to designing clinical trials, to making updated technology and treatments available to people of lower socio-economic status and to researching prostate cancer.

As the former Senior Investigator in the NCI Division of Cancer Prevention and Control and program director for the Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial, Brawley will help move us forward with his professionalism, expertise and sensitivity.

The Special Populations office at NCI is part of a broader array of strategies to fight cancer for everyone, including: a \$400 million increase in funding for NCI since 1993; quicker approval of cancer drugs as well as expanded access to promising new therapies and the toughest anti-tobacco initiative in American history.

Our efforts to combat minority cancer extend to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is helping to track minority cancer rates and actively recruits minorities for clinical trials.

The CDC has also played a major role in fighting breast and cervical cancers in minority communities, having provided funding to help 1.2 million uninsured and underinsured low-income women - about half of them minorities - receive mammograms and papsmears.

More than 136,000 African-Americans will be diagnosed with cancer this year. Precious African-American children should not face a greater threat than their white counterparts of losing a parent to cancer early, or never knowing their grandparents because of cancer's reach.

And no child should ever come into the world at greater risk of having their own lives and dreams cut short by cancer, simply because of the color of their skin.

U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services

HEALTH BRIEFS

CAR SEATS CAN HELP WITH MOTION SICKNESS

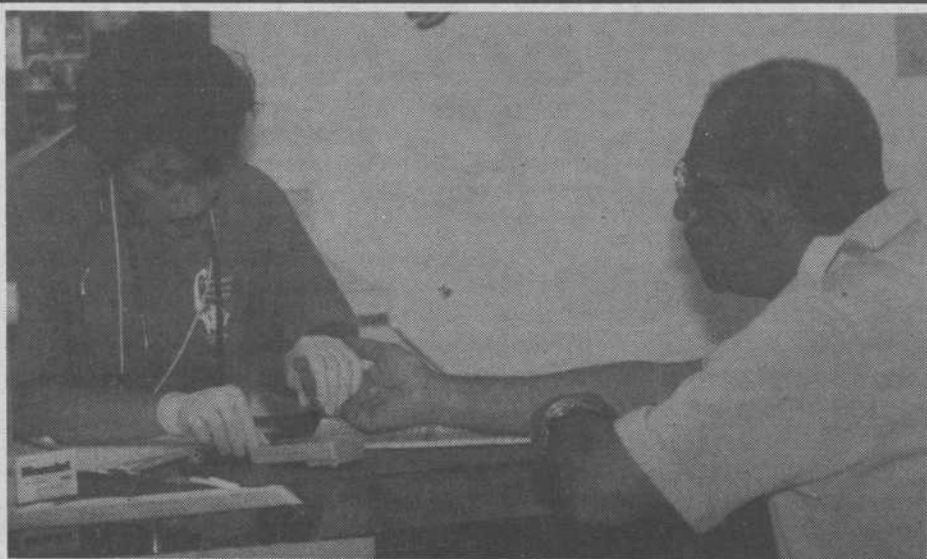
Car seats can help children who are prone to motion sickness. Motion sickness can be caused by the difference between what the eyes see and what the body senses, said Dr. Ellen M. Friedman, an otorhinolaryngologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "By elevating the car seats so that children can look out the window, they can see the direction of travel their bodies are experiencing," Friedman said. Traveling at night can also help reduce motion sickness because there is less visual stimulation at night.

HEART PATIENTS MUST BE CAUTIOUS TRAVELERS

If you're suffering from heart disease and your condition is unstable, you should carefully weigh the risks of foreign travel against possible aggravation of your condition. "An increase in underlying angina, shortness of breath, edema and other similar complaints might mean you should consider delaying the trip," said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. This is especially true if the trip is overseas or to a high elevation. For heart patients who do travel to foreign countries, Riley recommends carrying a supply of cardiac medicine and never assuming that your type of medicine will be available. Carry your drugs with you rather than in your luggage, which could be lost. Also, keep your medicines in their original containers to lessen the chance of confiscation at certain border crossings.

BE CAREFUL WITH INSULIN WHEN TRAVELING

Insulin-dependent diabetics should be careful with their insulin when traveling. Do not put it in the glove compartment or trunk of a vehicle, said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of the Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Doing so can result in insulin deterioration if the vehicle is exposed to extremely low or extremely high temperatures. Specially designed insulator packs are the best means for transporting insulin on a trip, Riley said. If your destination is a hot climate, a cooler pack is also advisable. Once you arrive at your destination, transfer the insulin to a refrigerator.



Second Baptist Church hosting health fair

Second Baptist Church will host a health fair from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 18 at its 500 W. Madison Ave. facility. The event, "Checking Yourself for Better Health," will offer workshops on diabetes and vision, drug and alcohol facts, breast self-exams, prostate cancer, smoking, food safety in restaurants and sexually transmitted diseases. Speakers will address topics like nutrition, stress, high blood pressure and stroke, breast and prostate cancer and drug and alcohol abuse and participants will be treated to a free, healthy lunch. Joyce Woodson, Lionel Starks and Willie Liggins, Second Baptist's health coordinator, are sponsoring the fair. For more information, call Second Baptist Church at 648-6155, or Willie Liggins at 646-5445.

Childhood Immunization Week begins April 18

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Nevada hospitals are partnering with state and local immunization authorities, community groups and businesses to plan a statewide Childhood Immunization Week, April 18-25.

The week's purpose: stressing the importance of immunizing children, which protects the children and the community.

The more children who are immune to the 10 preventable childhood diseases, the less risk there is that the diseases will spread.

Thanks to vaccines, diphtheria, pertussis (whooping cough), and polio have been nearly wiped out of many families. But the danger still persists and parents must be adamant about getting their children immunized - children need at least 12 vaccinations by their second

birthday to be adequately protected against certain diseases.

Childhood vaccinations can protect against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, mumps, measles, rubella, chicken pox, haemophilus influenzae B and hepatitis B.

In the last three years, there have been 212 cases of pertussis and eight cases of measles in Nevada. In 1997, the state had three of the five national cases of toxigenic diphtheria. All the illnesses could have been prevented through immunization.

Fourteen Nevada hospitals are collaborating with their local county health department or public health clinic to host and/or staff these clinics. For more information, call Stacy Jennings, 827-0184.

BEFORE 4/26/98



AFTER 4/26/98



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