

HEALTH

Researchers try treating hypertension with more than drugs

BALTIMORE (AP)—A little compassion may go a long way in treating hypertension.

Three hundred black men from a blighted area surrounding Johns Hopkins' Hospital were given medication for their high blood pressure, along with support from outreach workers, who offered practical help, inquired about their welfare and generally became friends and helpers.

During a two-year study, about half the men got their blood pressure under control and their emergency room visits dropped by 75 percent, according to *The (Baltimore) Sun*.

"Actually, it's the fact that somebody cares

about them" that spurred improvements, said Mary Roary, director of the study released last week at the American Heart Association meeting in Dallas.

There was no control group studied to allow comparative figures.

Since many blood pressure patients may not stay on medication for long, workers following up on the men is critical to reducing rates, said Dr. Wallace Johnson Jr., an assistant clinical professor at medicine at the University of Maryland School of Medicine.

Roary and other researchers at the Johns Hopkins' Center for Nursing Research recruited the men from the emergency room,

where they get their health care. At first, the patients thought they would be nothing more than guinea pigs.

Many didn't have jobs or health insurance, and were pessimistic about the future.

"They said, 'It doesn't matter what I do, I'm going to die. I can take my pill, but if I walk out of the house, I may get shot or hit by a car, or I may get AIDS,'" said Dwyane Monroe, a community health worker.

She drove the men to job interviews, talked to them about their problems, gave them her pager number. Some called her collect from jail. "This is about dealing with every single problem that we have," said Calvin Mayo,

50, who was part of the study.

"I knew it was serious, but I didn't know where to turn. I didn't know what to do. ... If it hadn't been for that program, I might have had a stroke."

The idea of sending outreach workers into the community isn't new, but experts say the concept has rarely been tried in a population of hypertensive black men ranging from ages 18 to 54.

The Hopkins group now wants to expand the study to include more drug treatment and employment services.

Researchers also are studying whether the program is suitable for a larger population.

Top obstetrician stirs controversy with childbirth theories

By Marilyn August

PARIS (AP) — A prominent French obstetrician is making headlines for saying fetuses of black women reach term one full week before the expected delivery date for Caucasian women.

Emile Papiernik, widely regarded as France's leading obstetrician, says in "Le Passeur de Vie," (The Delivery Man), that understanding racial distinctions can help doctors save the lives of newborns delivered dangerously past their due date.

"Recognizing that difference allows doctors to begin monitoring pregnant African mothers one week earlier," he said in a telephone interview. "This can cut in half prenatal deaths, fetal distress during delivery and the neo-natal damage associated with post-term births."

But with that theory, the

man who opened France's first authorized abortion clinic and helped conceive the nation's first test-tube baby is causing a stir again.

"Is Papiernik Racist?" *Elle* magazine headlined its review. The article concluded that he wasn't.

"The ethnic ethics of Prof. Papiernik," the center-right paper *Le Figaro* subtitled its article.

Papiernik, head of obstetrics at the Port-Royal Hospital in Paris, has published several articles on racial differences in pregnancy duration.

In France, about two infant deaths per 1,000 are caused by perinatal complications, meaning those that occur three months before delivery to seven days after.

But, Papiernik says, those numbers don't include the hundreds of babies who survive, often with lifelong handicaps and developmental delays that require long-term

care.

"Is there anything more traumatic than losing a healthy baby in the days preceding or during delivery?" Papiernik says. "It can be avoided without expensive, advanced technology — just changing the attitude that all pregnancies are the same."

"It's so simple, it knocks you over!" he said.

But getting out his message has not been so easy.

France's top left-leaning dailies, *Le Monde* and *Liberation*, have published nothing on the book, which Papiernik terms a "blackout." "Racial difference is not politically correct among Socialists" he said.

Liberation's science writer, Eric Favreau, said the paper had "no room for stories that didn't add anything exceptional," and *Le Monde* claimed it never received the book.

"It's so simple, it knocks you over!"

— Emile Papiernik

Papiernik says he knows firsthand about the danger of racial criteria. As a child during World War II, he narrowly escaped a roundup of Parisian Jews. His father perished at Auschwitz.

But he argues that acknowledging racial differences is the first step in achieving equality in medical care.

"As a doctor, I can tell you in numbers of lives lost about the stupidity of political correctness," he said.

Papiernik points to Fort-de-France, Martinique, where he claims perinatal deaths have dropped from seven or

eight per 1,000 to about four since the city's major hospitals adopted his methods.

"Papiernik's methods have been standard procedure here for years," said Dr. Danielle Sainte-Rose, head of the Redoute Maternity Clinic at Fort-de-France's teaching hospital, Centre Hospitalier Universitaire.

"For example, if a patient is black, we let her go into labor at 36 weeks if she's ready. If she's Caucasian, we give drugs until the 37th week or longer to delay labor," she said.

But Dr. Sainte-Rose said Papiernik's method was among several factors—such as the closing of small maternity clinics and better prenatal care — that have reduced perinatal deaths.

Clinics in Singapore applying Papiernik's findings also say they have reduced perinatal deaths among babies of Indian origin, who

mature earlier than babies of Chinese origin, according to medical papers Papiernik showed *The Associated Press*.

"Papiernik's research is very innovative and has far-reaching implications," said Dr. Greg Alexander, Chairman of the Dept. of Maternal and Child Health at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Alexander, who has written several articles with Papiernik, said the findings were helping overturn commonly accepted theories of gestation formed 150 years ago on the basis of Britain's predominantly Caucasian population.

But Mouloud Aounit, a French anti-racism activist, warned that the material could be exploited outside the scientific community.

"A doctor doesn't have control over how his work is interpreted," Aounit said.

Library seeking shoe donations

Special to Sentinel Voice

The West Las Vegas Library will host its annual Shoes for Children Holiday Concert Wednesday, Dec. 9 at 6 p.m. The library is located at 951 W. Lake Mead Blvd.

Library manager Joyce Thomas said the celebration will feature comedian Lou Collins and Gospel recording artist Faith as well as dancers, poets and other performers.

Admission is one new pair of children's shoes, sizes 0-13 or 1-12. Individuals, businesses and organizations are invited to participate and volunteerism is encouraged.

Donations will be distributed Saturday, Dec. 12, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the library theater.

Those interested can call 647-8169.

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