

Smoking gap between Blacks, Whites too big

By Hazel Trice Edney
Special to Sentinel-Voice
WASHINGTON (NNPA) - Cigarette smoking and lung cancer mortality rates overall are declining in the U.S., but lung cancer death disparities between the races — Blacks and Whites — remain alarming, leading health care and anti-smoking experts say.

"We haven't closed the gap. While everybody's improving, the gap is not closing. The five-year survival difference is still in the range of 10 to 15 percent for Blacks and Whites. So while it's an improvement for all groups, the difference or the disparity remains," says Dr. Harold Freeman, a respected surgical oncologist and director and founder of Harlem's Ralph Lauren Cancer Center for Cancer Care and Prevention.

He explains, "It's like you have the front wheels and back wheels of a car, but no

matter how fast you go, the back wheels are never going to catch up."

The association of state attorneys general reported in March that data derived from federal government tax collections shows a 4.2 percent decline in cigarette sales last year and a drop of 20 percent since the attorneys general reached a legal settlement with tobacco companies in 1998.

Anti-tobacco activist Sherry Watson-Hyde, executive director of NAATPN, the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network, is happy that the rates have declined for African-American smoking, though not deeply enough.

"Black male lung cancer rates have been over the top," Watson-Hyde says. Even with the state tobacco settlements, she said the tobacco industry still finds new ways to ensnare smokers with flavored cigarettes [along with]

special promotions.

NAATPN and other anti-tobacco organizations, such as the American Legacy Foundation, which has awarded a three-year grant of \$4.5 million to a coalition of six national Black organizations, including the National Newspaper Publishers Association Foundation, for tobacco prevention and cessation programs, focus largely on reverse marketing by educating African-Americans on the dangers of tobacco smoke.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that while the annual White lung cancer death rate is approximately 58 percent per 100,000 diagnoses, the rate for Blacks is 64 percent per 100,000. Cancer experts concur that the rates have remained consistently disparate — within the 15 percentile over the past two decades — even when fluctuating. Black and White women are

about the same at 40 percent for Black women and 42 percent for White. Tobacco use is the major cause of lung cancer in the United States.

About 90 percent of lung cancer deaths in men and nearly 80 percent of lung cancer deaths in women in the U.S. are due to smoking. Why are Black men dying of lung cancer at such higher rates? And what is being done about it?

Freeman believes race plays a role.

"Race is a determinant in how people get treated for cancer — even when they're

at the same economic status; not just lung cancer, but in general," he said. "The biggest challenge in America for disparities is to get standard treatment for everybody, to make it available somehow."

He said that unless a system is created that targets people's ability to get early medical intervention regardless of their ability to pay, the disparities will remain. A publicly funded "patient navigation" program that he started 16 years ago for breast cancer patients should be a model for the nation for all types of cancer, he said.

The public program pays for breast cancer screening for women regardless of their socio-economic status.

"I improved the five-year survival rate at Harlem Hospital from 39 percent to 70 percent for breast cancer in poor Black women," he said. "They remained poor. They remained Black. We didn't change that. But I changed what we did for them."

Some say that the belief by some African-Americans that surgery contributes to the death of cancer patients may be contributing to high cancer rates. (See *Smoking*, Page 13)

States skewer HIV/AIDS legal monetary changes

WASHINGTON (AP) - Lawmakers from California, New York and New Jersey on Thursday denounced proposed HIV/AIDS funding changes they say could shift tens of millions of dollars from the West and Northeast to the South.

Bush administration officials and Southern lawmakers countered that changes are needed to bring fairness to the way \$2 billion is distributed each year under the 1990 Ryan White CARE Act, the main federal HIV/AIDS spending law.

"The money needs to follow the infection," Rep. Charlie Norwood, R-Ga., said at a hearing of the House Energy and Commerce health subcommittee. "No one should receive the short end of the stick because of where they live."

Investigators with the Government Accountability Office have found that some funding formulas disproportionately benefit states with urban areas, due to a quirk that double-counts AIDS pa-

tients in 51 metropolitan areas. A separate quirk that counts some dead patients overwhelmingly helps San Francisco, giving the city an extra \$7 million a year.

The White House wants to eliminate both these quirks, though administration officials haven't offered details on how the changes would affect states.

The Health and Human Services Department's administrator of Health Resources and Services, Elizabeth Duke, could provide few details on the administration's proposals Thursday.

Lawmakers in California and New York fear the changes could cost their states more than \$20 million a year each. Republicans and Democrats on the House Energy and Commerce Committee have been negotiating with their counterparts on the Senate Health Committee to try to write a compromise bill updating the law.

Thursday's hearings showed how challenging that

might be.

Several California lawmakers arrived prepared to attack GAO's findings about inequitable funding. They were armed with a report released this week by the CAEAR Coalition — Communities Advocating Emergency AIDS Relief, a group made up mostly of AIDS advocates from big cities — that analyzed spending under the Ryan White act and found a much more equitable distribution than GAO did.

"I think it's skewed," said Rep. Anna Eshoo, D-Calif. "Why are we picking on the larger cities? ... It seems to me that there's excellent funding for other states."

"The chairman's state is right in the middle here," Eshoo added, referring to Georgia, home state of health subcommittee chairman Rep. Nathan Deal.

But Deal said he thinks the status quo needs to change. "It bothers me that we are allowing a system that counts deceased individuals," he said.

Festival

(Continued from Page 1)

Comings Rocky Mountain, Cox Digital telephone and Southwest Airlines.

"The headlining acts will be the Dazz Band and Lakeside," Genovese said.

The Dazz Band will take the stage at 7:15, and Lakeside will follow their performance at 9:15, both bands performing Saturday night.

On the opposite end of the festival, the Cox Digital Telephone Fiesta Stage will provide a wide selection of Latino bands, including Los Caporales, which is a seven-member mariachi band.

In the center of both stages, and essentially the festival as a whole, a boxing ring will house USA-sanctioned boxing matches. All boxers participating are local fighters that compete at the amateur level, but Genovese claims, judging from previous festivals, the boxing matches are one of Tastes and Tunes most popular attractions.

"The boxing keeps getting bigger and bigger. We started it two years ago, and we keep getting calls saying that it's great. We have 26 bouts over two days this year," Genovese said.

On Friday, the boxing matches begin at 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m., and Saturday they will take place from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. and again later that evening.

The festival will offer over 45 marketplace vendors throughout the festival where beverages, ethnic foods and arts and crafts will be sold.

Even though food and beverages must be purchased, organizers are working toward keeping prices as affordable as possible.

"We're asking all food vendors to keep every dish under seven bucks," Genovese said.

Some of the entrees food vendors will serve include, fried fish, BBQ, authentic Mexican food and Thai cuisine.

"On the north end of the event, we've created a Mexican Village with Mexican food vendors and craft vendors [and] all authentic

Mexican music," Genovese explained as he described the theme attraction, which is a new addition to the festival this year.

In addition to the wide range of ethnic food, alcohol will be served during the festival, but Genovese assures this event will be safe for everyone.

"[There] will be 'Beer-Free' zones and police officers will be sure everyone is following these rules," Genovese said.

In addition to 'beer free zones,' coordinators are taking precautions to ensure no underage drinkers consume alcohol illegally.

"All people that are of age and want to drink will receive a wrist-band after they show the proper ID," Genovese said.

The carnival will be one of the beer free zones and will offer finger food and rides for children.

"There will be nachos, hotdogs, and cotton candy," Genovese said.

Although admission into the festival is free, tickets for carnival rides must be purchased.

With crowds walking in and out during the festival, Genovese says safety is a priority.

"[Our] security is second to none. We don't take any chances," Genovese said.

Between the foods, music, boxing matches, Genovese concludes Tastes and Tunes is becoming popular across the city.

"Last year Taste and Tunes received the Program of the Year Award from the National Parks and Recreation Associations of Nevada Chapter. I think we're gaining momentum [each year]," he said.

With a festival of this magnitude, looking to the future is essential to ensure growth.

"We'd like it to be the premier urban festival in the valley. Our goal would be to continue to provide new activities and a safe and affordable [place] where family can come out and enjoy top quality entertainment. [We'd also like to expand it to three days]," Genovese said.

For information, call (702) 633-2418.



After graduating from the Expertise Cosmetology Institute, I immediately landed the perfect opportunity at Hot Headz Salon... Money's great and my schedule is MY SCHEDULE. Thanks, Expertise

—Ms. Kris, Las Vegas Class of 2002

- Pre-Registering for 2006 Classes
- Bi-Lingual (Spanish) Courses
- Excellent Placement Record — 92% Success Rate
- Financial Aid Available for Those Who Qualify
- Prepare for the Nevada State Exam

902 W. Owens | Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-636-8686 | www.expertisebeauty.com