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"THE TRUTH SHALL SET YOU FREE"

Prevention key in fighting strokes

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Jamaisa Nichols had a stroke at 21 years old. She was not smoking, nor was she significantly overweight throughout her life. She isn't male, she's not over the age of 55, strokes nor heart attacks run in her family, and she had never suffered from a previous stroke or heart attack. These are four of the five factors for being at risk for getting a stroke.

Nichols may not fall into those categories, but she is subject to the fifth risk factor. She is an African-American.

According to the National Stroke Association, Blacks are two times more likely to have or die from a stroke than Whites. Half the population of Black women will die from a stroke or heart disease, and it is the leading cause of death for Black

males, according to the American Heart Association. The numbers are too deafening to be ignored.

Like Nichols, a stroke can come when a person least expects it. Rose Hood, Nichols' mother, never saw it coming.

"I was in disbelief when they told me she had a stroke," Hood said. "You don't expect your child to have a stroke at 21 years old."

Many people who have had a stroke share in Hood's feelings of shock and disbelief. Many stroke victims, their family members or close friends ignored the warning symptoms or weren't even aware of the signs.

Knowing the warning symptoms and going to the hospital before the stroke happens can make a difference of life or death, accord-



Rose Hood, left, says she was absolutely floored when her 21-year-old daughter, Jamaisa Nichols, suffered a stroke.

ing to Dr. Stanley Cohen, the Stroke Prevention Medical Director at Sunrise Hospital. "Immediate attention is crucial," Cohen said. "The sooner you get in to the hospital the better."

Cohen named the early symptoms everyone should know:

- feeling of weakness
- numbness on one side of the body
- loss of speech or slurring words
- loss of vision partially
- sudden, severe headaches

Cohen urges people to

come to the hospital right away — and not to set an appointment.

"One out of every 20 people will get a stroke before their appointment," Cohen cautions.

The Shock of Stroke

Hood remembers the day she found her daughter lying unconscious on the bathroom floor.

"It was on a Saturday, October 5, 2002," she said.

Hood thought her daughter had hit her head and was knocked unconscious, but she found out otherwise after doctors at Mountain View

Hospital ran tests and discovered Nichols had a stroke.

"They told me she would never be the same," Hood said.

Since that day Hood has been Nichols only caregiver.

"It's really been devastating to me, physically and mentally," she said. One of the hardest parts of this experience for Hood has been seeing the changes in her daughter after she had the stroke.

"She can't walk or use her left hand," Hood said.

Nichols has paralysis on her left side, and has trouble speaking.

"She can say one word, but not full sentences," Hood said. "But it's getting better."

The emotional strain of the situation has also signified changes in Nichols personality.

"When she first had it she cried a lot, which is normal for a stroke survivor," Hood said. "She has given up hope, but I keep hope alive. I believe that she can walk someday, but she has a lot of fear."

For a young woman who has dance trophies sitting along her shelves, not being

able to walk has been the biggest challenge of all. Hood has taken her daughter to different therapists for physical training.

"The therapists here don't have the patience to deal with the mentally challenged," Hood said.

Nichols was diagnosed with Down syndrome when she was born. Nichols' pre-existing disability coupled with the effects of the stroke has made it difficult for Hood to get help.

"I can't get any help for her. Every door in this town has been slammed in our faces," Hood said. "After the stroke, she couldn't come home right away, but no nursing home would accept her. I tried every nursing home in the city and everyone rejected her."

Nichols has not been able to receive adequate care, for reasons she believes may constitute discrimination.

"I was hurt when she went to therapy because it didn't do her any good," Hood said. Without any patience to work with Nichols, the therapists simply rush the session, she

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OBAMA IN IT TO WIN IT

Presidential hopeful and Democratic Ill. Sen. Barack Obama greets supporters as he arrives for a rally at the Old State Capitol in Springfield, Ill. Obama launched "an improbable quest" to become America's first Black president, brazenly claiming the mantle of Abraham Lincoln, the U.S. president who ended slavery in 1864.

Jury clears Walgreens of discrimination

RENO, Nev. (AP)—A jury Tuesday cleared Walgreen Co. of racial discrimination alleged in a \$2.5 million civil lawsuit brought by four Black Texas men who say they were wronged in a confrontation at a Reno drug store four years ago.

The six-woman, two-man jury in Washoe County District Court deliberated less than an hour after listening to seven days of testimony.

The unanimous verdict capped a dramatic trial that saw the judge repeatedly admonish both legal teams and the lead plaintiff, Bruce Johnson, 44, of Houston, taken from the courthouse by ambulance last week when he suffered an asthma attack after aggressive cross-examination.

In their lawsuit, the four

men claimed that a photo lab clerk shouted a racial slur, slammed a door and denied them service after they complained about the quality of their photographs at the downtown Reno store in February 2003.

Walgreens' lawyers acknowledged the clerk slammed a door and walked off the job but denied the clerk uttered the n-word and maintained the incident was a case of poor customer service absent any racial bias.

"Obviously, we're pleased with the verdict," said Howard Rosenblum, a lawyer for Walgreens.

"We take allegations such as this very seriously," he said. "Walgreens has said all along we don't tolerate discrimination of any sort. ... It's good to see the system

work."

A lawyer for the plaintiffs said they would appeal the case to the Nevada Supreme Court. "We're not done," Ian Silverberg told The Associated Press. He said the appeal would challenge some rulings "that kept out a lot of information that I think should have gone to the jury about what Walgreens knew" about the clerk accused of the misconduct.

Silverberg said in closing arguments Tuesday morning that the men deserved millions but would accept just \$1 as justice served.

"It was wrong for Walgreens to treat these men differently for one reason and one reason only — the color of their skin," Silverberg said.

"These men stood up

against the 14th largest company in the U.S. for four years to let Walgreens know they were not going to take it," he told the jury. "Please let Walgreens know there is no more harmful word with such history and meaning for an entire group of people."

But a lawyer for the company, Clark Vellis, said the four men were "professional victims" looking to "turn justice into money." He urged the jurors to base their verdict on facts, "not sympathy or inflammatory statements about the Ku Klux Klan."

"Every time somebody has a bad experience, you can't sue. Every time somebody does something you don't like, you can't sue and try to turn it into money," Vellis said in his closing ar-

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