

Health/Fitness

Studies Find Increase In Suicides

Among Black Youths *By Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell*

Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell

Atlanta, GA- Not long ago, the words "suicide" and "African Americans" were almost never mentioned in the same breath. Despite confronting challenges from slavery to Jim Crow to structural racism, blacks rarely took their own lives. It was a positive health disparity. Until now.

There is alarming evidence that the suicide rate for young African-American men is escalating, and just as much evidence that America's health-care system is ill-equipped to curb it.

Dr. Claire Xanthos, a health services research specialist, recently wrote a policy paper citing studies showing that from 1980 to 1995, the suicide rate for black adolescents rose from 5.6 to per 100,000 of the population. Put in starker terms: this doubling of the suicide rate for young black males has made it the third-leading cause of death among that demographic group.

Clearly, it is a complex problem that is directly related to life experiences of young African-American males in America. While the suicide rate for young black men has risen, the suicide rate for black women remains among the lowest of any demographic group.

So why are our young black men killing themselves?

Dr. Xanthos concludes there are many factors, and among them are the race-related challenges that these youths face. The data show that they go to jail, drop out of school and become victims of crime at rates far higher than their white counterparts. Moreover, young black males are more likely than not to live in a family environment that

is less than ideal; roughly 70 percent of African Americans live in single-parent homes.

The combination of family stress, violence in their communities, and the stigma and discrimination they face is taking a toll on young black males. Some mental health specialists, such as Dr. Alvin Poussaint, argue that "death by cop" incidents should be counted as suicide. These are occasions when black youths are despondent and won't commit suicide, but purposely break the law so someone else will kill them.

"How many young men who put themselves in situations where it's very likely that they're going to get shot to death are actually committing suicide?" asked Dr. Poussaint in a recent interview on National Public Radio. "There is such a thing as what we call victim-precipitated homicide, which is suicide. The most classic example would be suicide by cop, which you read about in the newspaper from time to time, where people wanted to be shot to be killed because they were suicidal, but they didn't want to do it themselves...because there's still a stigma attached to committing suicide, so they'd rather have someone else kill them or have it seem like an accident."

This rising suicide tide can impact middle-class black teenagers in white suburbs, as well as those in inner-city neighborhoods. In fact, Dr. Xanthos argues that black youths living in white communities often face the trauma of not relating to their white neighbors and also feeling estranged from blacks from poorer, urban settings. Certainly, the death of James Dungy, the 18-year-old son of Indianapolis Colts coach Tony Dungy, underscored that suicide can strike the rich and poor.

What's clear is that black communities, healthcare professionals and public health officials must mobilize to meet the challenges presented by this problem.

The stigma towards mental illness in the black communities is so taboo that obvious signs that someone has

(continued in last column)

San Bernardino County (SBC) African American Health Issues

Dr. V. Diane Woods, Assistant Research Psychologist, UCR; and Founding CEO/President AAHI-SBC

Board of Supervisor's (BOS) Meeting – September 9, 2008

Good Morning Mr. Biane & BOS, thank you for allowing me to speak.

For the record, on August 26, 2008, I shared with the Board shocking public health statistics about extremely high deaths rates for San Bernardino County residents for heart disease and stroke, the #1 and #3 causes of death in this county. The DOH is mandated by the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the CDC to promote health, to keep the population healthy based on target specific local population data, and to bring these diseases under control in their local jurisdiction.

For the record, the #2 cause of death is cancer. September is National Prostate Cancer Awareness Month, as proclaimed by President George Bush in 2003.

Slide #1: displays the US Prostate Cancer Incidence and Death Rates by race and ethnicity for the period of 1997 to 2001. This data is from the American Cancer Society. Note the highest level of death is among African American men. In fact, American men of African ancestry have the highest death rate from prostate cancer in the entire WORLD.

Slide #2: displays this same California trend for 20 years in American men of African ancestry

Slide #3: displays the death rate for prostate cancer in San Bernardino County. Note the significant differences in death among Black residents and others. This is the definition of a health disparity according to Public Law 106-525, The Minority Health & Health Disparity Research & Education Act of 2000. This data is from our County Department of Public Health data files dating back

to 1999. The significance here is that in our county Black men die 3 times more than other groups from prostate cancer. The average age at death for a male of African ancestry in our county is 56 years.

These rates are at epidemic proportions. This sustained trend has been documented in our county for over 20 years.

Like epidemic levels of preventable heart diseases and stroke in our Black population, prostate cancer is running rampant. Yet, the County does not invest significant money to control these epidemic health problems in the African American population.

This month the AAHI-SBC, the Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches, St. Andrews Masonic Lodge, Prince Hall Masonic Lodge, High Desert Masonic Lodge, the Westside Action Group, and other concerned citizens launched a major initiative among African American men, called the Prostate Cancer Prevention Program, to bring this epidemic under control. Also, the Community Health Action Network is sponsoring Men of Color Health Expo in Victorville September 13th to address the same issues. We invite the BOS to invest significant money in community collaborative like these to bring this epidemic under control in the African American population.

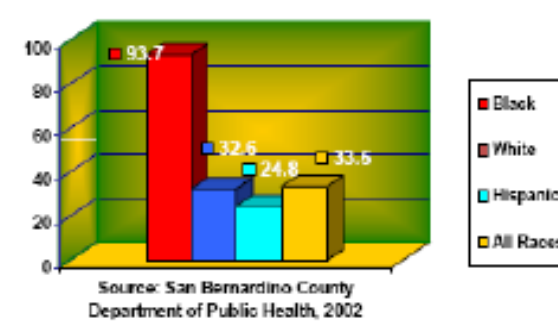
Sir, this is what the DOH is mandated to do. This is one area where the County is out of compliance. www.AAHI-SBC.org (909)880-2600



Slide 1

San Bernardino County

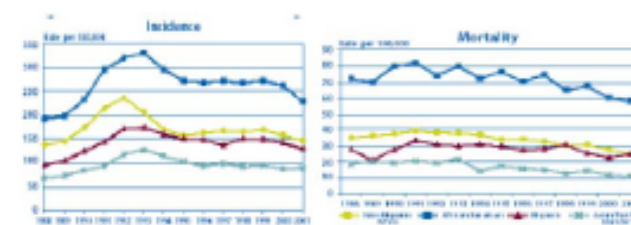
Prostate Cancer: 1999 Age-Adjusted Death Rates by Race/Ethnicity, per 100,000 Men



Source: San Bernardino County Department of Public Health, 2002

Slide 2

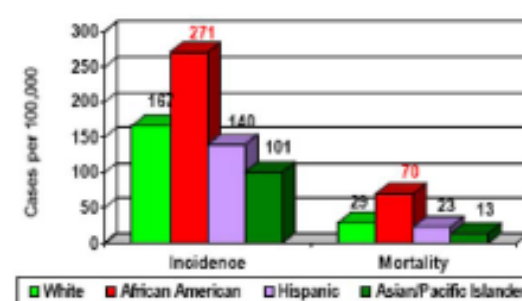
California Trends in Prostate Cancer by Race/Ethnicity, 1988-2001



Source: California Cancer Facts and Figures, 2005. American Cancer Society, California State and Public Health Institute, California Cancer Registry.

Slide 3

U. S. Prostate Cancer Incidence and Death Rates by Race/Ethnicity, 1997-2001



Source: Cancer Statistics 2005, American Cancer Society

Dot-Mil-Docs" That Guy Helps Troops to A Healthier Lifestyle

Staff Reports

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – That Guy helps troops to a healthier lifestyle – Program Manager Chuck Watkins discusses the MHS' powerful but light-hearted awareness campaign with a serious message: drink responsibly because you don't want to be labeled as "That Guy!"

Hosted by the Department of Defense, "Dot-Mil-Docs" broadcasts at www.blogtalkradio.com/Dot-Mil-Docs Thursdays at 3 p.m. (EDT).

With thousands of downloads it is evident that the "Dot-Mil-Docs" audience is growing. "Dot-Mil-Docs" first aired on May 1, 2008 with the ultimate goal of providing insight into Military Health System (MHS) leadership and the various agencies, programs and departments they represent. Each episode aims to provide information that beneficiaries can actually use in their daily lives. "Dot-Mil-Docs" also presents the opportunity for the MHS to talk about resources which may otherwise go unknown.

For the convenience of the listener, previous "Dot-Mil-Docs" shows are available for download from two different sources: visit the video and audio section on www.health.mil or www.blogtalkradio.com/Dot-Mil-Docs.

About TRICARE Management Activity and the Military Health System

TRICARE Management Activity, the Defense Department activity that administers the health care plan for the uniformed services, retirees and their families, serves more than 9.2 million eligible beneficiaries worldwide in the Military Health System (MHS). The mission of the MHS is to enhance Department of Defense and national security by providing health support for the full range of military operations. The MHS provides quality medical care through a network of providers, military treatment facilities, medical clinics and dental clinics worldwide. For more about the MHS go to www.health.mil.

Bass and the 47th Assembly People's Council to hold Annual Community Health Fair in Conjunction with the City of Los Angeles' Day of Service

Staff Reports

Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) and the 47th Assembly District People's Council will hold the 2nd Annual Well Body-Well Mind Community Health Fair as part of the City of Los Angeles' Day of Service on Saturday, September 20th, 2008, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at Rancho Cienega Park, 5001 Rodeo Road, Los Angeles, CA 90016. This community event is free and open to the public. Attendees will receive important information from numerous health organizations and programs on issues ranging from diabetes, cancer, obesity and much more. Doctors from the California Medical Association and other health professionals also will be on hand to provide health screenings and healthy living demonstrations. The event is co-sponsored by the Jenesse Center, a non-profit domestic violence intervention organization located in South Los Angeles.

When: Saturday, September 20, 2008

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Where: Rancho Cienega Park
5001 Rodeo Road
Los Angeles, CA 90016

Background:

Speaker Karen Bass (D-Los Angeles) represents the 47th Assembly District representing Culver City, West Los Angeles, Westwood, Cheviot Hills, Leimert Park, Baldwin Hills, Windsor Hills, Ladera Heights, the Crenshaw District, Little Ethiopia and portions of Korea Town and South Los Angeles. She made history when the Cali-

fornia Assembly elected the Los Angeles Democrat as its 67th Speaker, catapulting a Democratic woman to the post for the first time in the state's history. Speaker Bass also made national history as the first African American woman to serve in this powerful state legislative role in the country.

Jenesse Center, Inc. is the oldest domestic violence intervention program in South Los Angeles. The Center was founded in 1980 by five African American women who were survivors of domestic violence. It's mission is to provide victims of domestic violence with a comprehensive, centralized base of support to assist them in addressing their immediate crisis and changing the patterns of their lives.

A Day of Service, presented by Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa as well as Council Members Herb Wesson and Bernard Parks, underlines the City's commitment to service in our neighborhoods and as a catalyst for continued community involvement. It engages and connects local assets such as schools, neighborhood councils, community-based organizations, city departments, public officials, parents and youth groups, and others in organizing service activities such as planting trees, painting murals, home makeovers, landscaping or volunteering in retirement homes. Projects are designed for anyone, accommodating all age-groups and schedules, with projects lasting from one hour to the whole day.



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A Model Woman's Medical Center Celebrates 10 Years Of Exceptional Healthcare To Women

Staff Reports



Dr. Suzanne Marie Greenidge

New York, NY - Woman To Woman OB/GYN, based in the cities of Yonkers, Tarrytown and Riverdale, New York, is celebrating a very important milestone—10 years of providing extraordinary obstetric and gynecological care for women. Founded by visionary Dr. Suzanne Marie Greenidge, Woman To Woman is a comprehensive medical center that provides a wide range of expert services and the highest quality of care uniquely tailored for women. Nearly 20,000 women have found support at Woman To Woman, with thousands of surgeries completed and 200-plus babies delivered each year.

These remarkable accomplishments represent the innovative spirit of founder Dr. Suzanne Marie Greenidge, a wife and mother of two, who herself has delivered thousands of babies, and has performed over 2,000 surgeries—some of them life-saving—in her 15-year career.

Dr. Greenidge is an accomplished, award-winning medical doctor and skilled surgeon specializing in OB/GYN, and an Assistant Clinical Professor of OB/GYN at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. She was inspired to pursue medicine by a misdiagnosis in pregnancy that resulted in the permanent brain damage of her younger sister. "It was a devastating experience in my childhood," recalls Dr. Greenidge. "But fortunately, it set the course of my life and career to see that women are pro-

vided the best medical care possible." Under Dr. Greenidge's skilled management, Woman To Woman employs a staff of 20 women who provide superior quality, personalized, all-inclusive OB/GYN care uniquely tailored to each woman's individual needs.

Expert services offered by Woman To Woman include obstetric and gynecological ultrasound services, office surgery (including colposcopy, Leep, D/C, endometrial biopsy & ablation, labioplasty and vaginoplasty), and the treatment of fibroids, menopause and infertility. Equipped with state of the art equipment, practices and procedures (including electronic storage of patient records and electronic transmission of prescription), Woman To Woman provides the most up-to-date health care for women in a warm and embracing environment. A trusted pioneer in women's health and wellbeing, Dr. Greenidge has developed a keen sense of how to treat the complex medical issues women face.

Dr. Greenidge has a BA from Smith College, a Doctor of Medicine from SUNY Health Science Center at Brooklyn, an OB/GYN Residency at Harlem Hospital/Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, and membership in numerous medical associations. Her particular expertise in General Obstetrics, General Gynecology, Vaginal Surgery, Laparoscopic GYN Surgery and General GYN Surgery enables her to quickly understand the medical condition at hand, find solutions and execute surgical procedures with precision, grace and a very high success rate. These qualities—combined with her ability to train others with excellence—have made Woman To Woman Medical Center a most distinctive 10-year success story.

(Increase In Suicides continued)

a problem are frequently ignored, even by close family members and friends. The first step must come from parents and friends recognizing the behavior patterns that indicate someone has a problem, and then working to get help for that person.

There is also a crucial role to be played by public health programs, such as Medicaid, which must make it easier for young black men to receive counseling and treatments.

But once these teens get to treatment facilities another problem develops: the lack of black therapists, counselors and psychiatrists. According to data, blacks are about four percent of the nation's psychiatrists, three percent of the psychologists and seven percent of social workers. It's imperative that more African Americans be trained for those positions. The problems weighing on many black youths are created by racism and the family, educational and urban tensions that they face in everyday life. In these instances, an African-American counselor or physician who may be more likely to grasp the situation is needed to provide assistance.

Dr. Xanthos also raises the need for more "bicultural" training for young black males. Or put another way, it is learning to survive in a white society. Such training would better prepare black youths for integration into schools and workplaces that are predominantly white, while also preparing black youths to confront and overcome the discrimination they are likely to face in American society.

This problem can no longer be ignored. It must be faced in our homes, our communities and by public officials in schools and health facilities.

The reality is that young black males face some of the biggest hurdles in our society, and if they are going to succeed we all must do a better job of identifying people with problems and facilitating the treatment that can put them on a successful path.

(Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell, associate director of Development at the National Center for Primary Care of Morehouse School of Medicine, is also director of Community Voices, a non-profit working to improve health services, and health-care access, for all Americans. For print or broadcast interviews with Dr. Treadwell, please contact Alicia Ingram, 404-493-1724, ingramalicia@bellsouth.net.)