



NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION WILL PARTNER WITH AFRICAN AMERICAN CHURCHES TO REACH UNINSURED BEFORE MARCH 31ST DEADLINE TO ENROLL IN HEALTH COVERAGE

Physicians Will Provide Critical Health Assessments and Screenings at Faith-Based Events

March 10, 2014 – Washington, D.C. – The National Medical Association (NMA), the nation’s largest organization of African American physicians representing over 37,000 doctors, announced today it is partnering with Enroll America and African American religious denominations to help educate minority communities about the Affordable Care Act and increase public awareness of the opportunity for African Americans to have health insurance coverage. Twenty-one percent or 1 in 5 African Americans under the age of 65 do not have health insurance coverage.

A recent survey by Enroll America showed that 68% of uninsured African Americans are unaware that financial help is available to help pay for the new health insurance options. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, six in 10 uninsured African Americans may qualify either for tax credits to purchase coverage in the Health Insurance Marketplace or for Medicaid or the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

“The churches in the African American community play a pivotal role in informing people about the Affordable Care Act and encouraging them to enroll for health coverage,” said Dr. Michael LeNoir, President of the NMA. “Our partnership with the faith community will provide our physicians with the opportunity to help the uninsured understand the long-term ramifications of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. In addition, we will provide cholesterol, blood pressure and other screenings at the church events.”

Statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that 14% of African Americans, or approximately 5.5 million people, are considered to be in fair or poor health. Approximately 38% of African American men and 44% of African American women, 20 years of age or older, have hypertension while 38 % of African American men and 54 percent of African American women, over 20 years of age, are obese. The numbers pertaining to smoking are also very sobering. More than 25% of Black men and 18% of Black women, 18 years of age or older, smoke cigarettes. Under the Affordable Care Act, all plans are required to cover smoking cessation interventions free of cost.

“The NMA takes a hard line on smoking and considers it to be public enemy number one as it pertains to the health of the African American community,” said Dr. LeNoir. “Smoking is a major contributing factor in the development of heart disease and cancer. A recent report issued by the U.S. Surgeon General states that individuals who smoke expose themselves to thousands of chemicals and compounds, many of which are known to cause cancer.”

African American males lead all ethnic groups in the number of new cancer cases. They also rank first in the number of deaths caused by cancer. African American women rank second in the number of new cases of cancer each year but rank number one when it comes to cancer deaths among females. In the past, many cancer patients were denied coverage based on their pre-existing condition, but now, nobody can be denied because of their cancer history.

“Churches are the center of the African American Community and are at the forefront of educating people about the Affordable Care Act,” said Etoy Ridgnal, Director of African American Engagement and Faith Based Initiatives for Enroll America. “The African American churches in the Faith Based Initiative have a combined membership of over 17 million. Now, thanks to this partnership with physicians, individuals who attend our church events will not only learn how they can get help paying for health insurance but they will also have access to information about various diseases provided by experts.”

The partnership with Enroll America, African American religious denominations, and the NMA will focus on the 11 states that have large numbers of African Americans and others who are uninsured. The states include Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas. Enroll America has launched a grassroots campaign in those states called Get Covered America. The NMA’s physicians will also collaborate with church leaders on events in Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, and other states with significant numbers of uninsured African Americans.

NMA physicians will support Enroll America’s Faith Based Initiative beyond the first open enrollment deadline of March 31 and continue throughout the remainder of this year into 2015, helping to educate, inform, and provide screenings for the uninsured.

Enroll America, the nation’s leading health care enrollment coalition, brings together community and health organizations, businesses and others to inform consumers about the new health coverage options and how to enroll in them. It is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit 501c(3) organization.

The National Medical Association is the largest and oldest national organization representing African American physicians and their patients in the United States. The NMA is a 501 (c) (3) national professional and scientific organization representing the interests of more than 37,000 African American physicians and the patients they serve. NMA is committed to improving the quality of health among minorities and disadvantaged people through its membership, professional development, community health education, advocacy, research and partnerships with federal and private agencies. Throughout its history, the National Medical Association has focused primarily on health issues related to African Americans and medically underserved populations, however, its principles, goals, initiatives and philosophy encompass all ethnic groups.

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Photo Caption: *On hand to announce the partnership between the National Medical Association were (Left to Right) Rev. Miriam Burnett, M.D., Medical Director of the Worldwide African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church; Dr. Pam DeVeaux, Supervisor, 2nd Episcopal District, AME Church; Etoy Ridgnal, Director of African American Engagement and Faith Based Initiatives for Enroll America; Dr. Michael LeNoir, President of the National Medical Association; Minister Leslie Watson Malachi, Director of African American Religious Affairs, People for the American Way Foundation; and Rev. Kevin Agee, Presiding Elder, Washington/Virginia District, Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. (Photo by Lon Walls)*