



African American Physicians Recognize American Diabetes Month

African Americans are dying unnecessarily from diabetes and are disproportionately affected by the disease compared to the general population.

Silver Spring, Maryland (November 26, 2013) — As we close out the month of November, the National Medical Association (NMA) is pleased to recognize this month as American Diabetes Month. This is an optimal time to raise awareness of diabetes in African Americans. Diabetes is a disease in which the body does not produce or properly use insulin, a hormone that is needed to convert sugar, starches and other food into energy needed for daily life. The cause of diabetes is unknown, although both genetics and environmental factors such as obesity and lack of exercise appear to play roles.

Diabetes is one of the more serious diseases that affect African Americans. It is currently is the fourth-leading cause of death by disease among African Americans and is the leading cause of blindness, kidney failure and amputation. While diabetes affects nearly 3 million African Americans, half of those with the disease don't know it.

In the United States, more than 25 million people are living with diabetes and 79 million more are at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. However, African Americans are disproportionately affected by diabetes compared to the general population, according to the American Diabetes Association. Nearly 19% of all African Americans ages 20 and older have been diagnosed with diabetes. Moreover, African Americans are nearly two times more likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic whites.

“Many people in the African American community are dying unnecessarily from diabetes. This is unfortunate, because a lot of times this disease can be controlled by simply changing your diet and incorporating exercise in to your daily routine. It is imperative that this message resonates with those who are most affected by the disease,” states Michael A. LeNoir, NMA president. “The number of African Americans with diabetes has increased immensely and this is alarming, so there is, indeed, a cause for concern in the African American community. As African American physicians, it is incumbent upon us to work with the patients and the communities we serve to prevent and control this deadly disease. You would be surprised at the number of African Americans who are living with diabetes and have yet to be diagnosed because they don't even know they have it.”

The number of African Americans with diabetes has tripled since the early 1960s, which has lead to a near-epidemic in the African American community, according to the American Diabetes Association.

The NMA urges African Americans to seek prevention and control not only during the month of November but year-round.

For more information on the NMA, please visit www.NMAnet.org

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Founded in 1895, the National Medical Association (NMA) is the nation's oldest and largest medical association representing the interests of more than 35,000 African American physicians and their patients. The NMA repeatedly advocates for policies that would assure equitable and quality health care for all people.