

HEALTH

The Portland Observer

First African-American Medical Missions Conference

The Myers Foundation For Indigent Health Care & Community Development will host Tchula '94 African-American Medical Missions Conference in Jackson and Tchula, Missouri. Rev. Ronald Myers, Sr., M.D., medical doctor, baptist minister and accomplished jazz musician, has been a long time advocate of rural Christian health care in the Mississippi delta. Dr. Myers, who gained national media attention through his efforts to provide health care to impoverished Mississippi delta town of Tchula, Mississippi despite government opposition, is concerned about how health care reform will impact the rural poor.

"Christians must be prepared to respond to God's call to medical missions with compassion to the needs of the poor through sacrificial service," states Dr. Myers. Dr. Myers has the distinction of being the first ordained and commissioned African-American medical missionary to the Mississippi delta from black baptist churches in Wisconsin and perhaps the first in the history of the black church in America.



Dr. Ronald V. Myers examines sick toddler at the Tchula Family Health Center in Tchula, Miss. Dr. Myers is conducting an African-American Medical Conference in hopes it will encourage more Christian physicians wanting to provide the same services his clinics provide.

"Health care is moving towards a managed care system where physicians, medical service providers and hospitals will come together to offer a full range of services," states Dr. Myers. "In rural Mississippi, where hospitals have closed and many towns do not have doctors, attention must be given to whether the health plans proposed in Washington will meet the needs of the people in poor rural communities like Tchula. Christians must continue to stand in the gap and serve in poor communities."

The purpose of the conference is to look at the African-American churches call to missions and examine some of the holistic responses to the needs in our communities, specifically looking at responses to health care needs. The conference is being held in association with Destiny Movement, Inc., the Christian Community Health Fellowship and the Mississippi Association of Christian Family Health Centers. Conferees will tour Mississippi Christian health centers in Jackson, Tutwiler, Cary and Tchula.

For more information, call (601) 247-3364.

North Portland Vision Center Closes

The Pacific University College of Optometry has announced that it will be closing its Cascade Campus Family Vision Center which serves residents of North and Northeast Portland with vision care services. The effective date of this closure is July 15, 1994. The Cascade Campus Vision Center is located at 600 N. Killingsworth (across the street from the Portland Community College Cascade Campus).

Inner-city residents and community agencies and resources seeking affordable vision care services are invited to contact Pacific University's Portland Family Vision Center which is located at 411 SW 10th Ave., Suite 500 in downtown Portland.

The Pacific University College of Optometry hopes to re-establish, within the next several months, a vision clinic serving inner-city residents which will operate as a part of the Multnomah County North/Northeast Clinic which is currently located on N. MLK Jr. Blvd.

As with the Cascade Campus Vision Center, Pacific's Portland Family Vision Center provides vision care according to individual and family income. Patients pay for services using a sliding fee scale. The Portland Vision Center also is able to offer patients a more comprehensive list of vision services than was available at the Cascade Campus Vision Center including free vision screenings, complete vision examinations, eye disease and special testing services, vision therapy services, low vision care, contact lens care, infant/pediatric care, referral services for special needs, and eye wear dispensing services.

For more information regarding affordable vision services for inner-city residents, please call the Pacific University Portland Family Vision Center at 224-2323.

One With Heart Presents: A Traveler's Safety Workshop For Women

One With Heart, located at 4231 SE Hawthorne Blvd., presents a self-defense workshop for women planning to travel this Summer or Fall. The workshop will be held on Saturday, July 9th from 1:00-4:30p.m. Cost is \$40 if pre-registered by July 2nd. Other wise, cost is \$45. Call 231-1999 to reserve your place.

- Learn practical physical and verbal self-defense skills
- Develop strategies for preventing threats to your safety
- Increase your awareness of new surroundings
- Gain self-confidence and travel more safely
- Course sizes are limited. To register call 231-1999.

Men Needed For Prostate Cancer Study

Men in the Portland/Vancouver area will have an opportunity to participate in the first large-scale prevention trial for prostate cancer in the United States. The study, designed to establish whether taking the drug finasteride will prevent prostate cancer, will be coordinated by Southwest Oncology Group and is sponsored by the U.S. National Cancer Institute.

"The Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial is a very important prevention effort," said Bruce Lowe, M.D., associate professor of Urology at Oregon Health Sciences University. "This year in the United States, there will be about 165,000 new cases of prostate cancer and about 35,000 deaths. Prevention of cancer is our highest goal, and the need for effective prevention strategies is clear."

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved finasteride in 1992 for the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia, a non-cancerous enlargement of the prostate gland. Because prostate cancer is influenced by similar hormonal factors, researchers believe that finasteride may also prevent cancer.

More than half a million men in 25 countries are currently taking finasteride for benign prostatic hyperplasia, but the drug has never been tested for cancer prevention. The National Cancer Institute is providing about \$60 million to conduct the testing.

Eighteen thousand men, age 55 and older, will participate nationally. The minimum age limit was selected

because older men are at highest risk of developing prostate cancer. About 98 percent of prostate cancers are diagnosed in men age 55 or older.

The men in the trial will be divided randomly into two groups. Half will take the drug for seven years, and the other half will take a placebo, an inactive pill that looks like finasteride. The two groups will then be compared to determine whether their prostate cancer rates differ.

Neither the participants nor the study physicians will know which men are getting finasteride and which men are getting placebo. This permits researchers to see the possible benefits and side effects of the drug without being influenced by other factors, such as expectations of participants or researchers.

"There's no guarantee that a man who enrolls in the trial won't develop prostate cancer," Lowe cautioned. "But all men in the study, whether they get finasteride or placebo, will have the opportunity for close follow-up for the detection of prostate cancer."

One of the main advantages of using finasteride in a prevention trial is that the drug works only in the prostate, and its side effects are relatively rare and relatively mild, Lowe said.

Men who are interested in participating in the study, should contact the Division of Urology at Oregon Health Sciences University, (503) 494-5601 or (503) 494-4784.

Kidney Failure, High Blood Pressure

Kidney failure, one of the leading health problems in America today, is a serious concern for African-Americans. Although whites still constitute the largest number of kidney patients, the rate of kidney failure among African-Americans today is nearly four times as great as the rate of kidney failure among whites. Most alarming, that rate is growing. This high rate of kidney failure is a result of the incidence of high blood pressure and diabetes among African-Americans, the two leading causes of kidney disease.

In healthy individuals, the two kidneys, which are about the size of a fist, perform several vital, life-sustaining functions. One of their major functions is to filter the blood of waste products to remove toxins (poisons) from the blood. The kidneys also maintain the body's fluid levels, regulate blood pressure, synthesize vitamins, and generate erythropoietin, a hormone that regulates the production of anemia-preventing red blood cells. Many other organs in the body depend on the kidneys to function

normally -- and when the kidneys become damaged by disease, the rest of the body is affected as well. Some problems associated with kidney disease include pericarditis (inflammation of the heart), dementia, bone disease and anemia.

Kidney failure is primarily caused by hypertension and diabetes. In African-Americans, the most common of kidney disease is hypertension, or high blood pressure. Continued hypertension damages small arteries in the kidneys and causes them to become thick and rigid. When this happens, blood flow to the kidney is limited. Therefore, the kidneys can no longer filter wastes efficiently or perform any of their other vital functions. If hypertension is left untreated, the risk of total kidney failure increases.

High blood pressure is a leading cause of death among African-Americans. While about 24 percent of the white population has high blood pressure, the incidence among African-Americans is significantly higher -- about 36 percent. The exact reason

why African-Americans have a higher incidence of hypertension is not known. High-fat diets, alcohol consumption and smoking are all risk factors. It may be that African-Americans have a genetic predisposition to hypertension and kidney disease. African-Americans also tend to develop more severe cases of disease and to get it at an earlier age. For this reason, African-Americans have a comparatively high risk of kidney failure as well as other diseases associated with high blood pressure, such as strokes and heart failure.

Having regular blood pressure checkups is one of the most important ways to avoid kidney failure as well as many other diseases. Checkups are critical because people often have no symptoms with high blood pressure and don't know they have it until checked by a doctor, nurse or other health professional. Blood pressure checkups are quick and painless -- and may be offered free of charge at some clinics. It is important to remember that hypertension is easy to treat. Side effects from medications,

if any, usually can be managed. Anyone experiencing side effects should discuss them with their doctor, who may prescribe a different medication.

It is also important to recognize some of the warning signs of kidney disease. These include high blood pressure that becomes more difficult to control, shortness of breath, swelling of the hands and feet, blood in the urine, and pain in the back below the rib cage. The benefit of intervention is that the progression of kidney disease can be slowed down, ideally to the point a patient experiences no symptoms at all.

The best treatment for kidney disease is prevention. People who eat well-balanced meals and exercise regularly can sharply reduce their risk of high blood pressure. But because high blood pressure can cause so many different health problems -- and is so common among African-Americans -- it is important to get a checkup on a regular basis. Taking these steps may not only help put off kidney disease, they may also help people live longer, healthier lives.

Packwood And Dole Unveil Health Care Plan

Oregon Senator Bob Packwood, the ranking Republican member of the Senate Finance Committee, and Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole, R-Kan. have unveiled a health care reform bill they say will fix what's broken with America's current health care system without the drastic disruption called for under various other proposals.

"We believe this bill will provide the necessary reforms to our current

health care system that Americans want and need," Packwood said.

Specifically, the bill calls for: Insurance reforms guaranteeing all Americans access to affordable, portable and non-exclusionary insurance for themselves and their families; low income subsidies making insurance affordable for low-income families; and voluntary purchasing pools - establishing voluntary pur-

chasing cooperatives so small businesses, the self-employed and individuals can increase their access to affordable insurance.

The Dole/Packwood bill would open insurance plans offered under the Federal Employees Health Benefit program to small businesses and self-employed individuals, thus giving immediate access to the nation's largest health insurance purchasing

pool for millions of Americans.

Packwood pointed out that the bill is significant not only for what it does, but for what it doesn't do.

"The Dole/Packwood bill preserves America's choice of health care, unlike other approaches that limit choices to a one-size-fits-all minimum set of covered benefits," Packwood said.

He added "We don't appoint a commission in Washington to run the nation's health care system. We don't change the insurance you have, we only guarantee your right to keep it."

Finally, Packwood said that the bill also does not include employer mandates which would make any bill unpassable in the Senate.

Discount Coupons On Bike Helmets Available

Property and casualty insurance companies throughout the Western Insurance Information Service (WIIS) are offering coupons for \$10.00 off the purchase of any Bell Brand Helmet (except CycleRight Helmets) in the Portland Metro area.

"The insurance industry has supported public safety programs like this for a long time," says Jean-Pierre Fontenot, WIIS Speaker Bureau Coordinator. Noting that a majority of fatal bike accidents involve head injuries, Fontenot continues, "Wearing a bicycle helmet may not reduce the number of accidents, but taking the measure to wear a helmet can make the difference between getting a bump on the head and having a serious, possible fatal, head injury."

Recognizing that the use of bike

safety helmets dramatically reduces the number and severity of head injuries to young bicyclists, and that Oregon's new bike helmet law requiring bicyclists 16 years of age and younger to wear an approved helmet goes into effect July 1, 1994, the WIIS Oregon Insurance Council (OIC) wanted to find a way to make affordable helmets available to the public. Working with Bell Sports Cycle Right Community Helmet Program, the safety helmet manufacturer has made coupons available to WIIS to distribute in the Portland area.

These \$10.00 discount coupons are redeemable at any Bike Gallery location in the Portland area (Eastside: 5329 Sandy Blvd.; Downtown: 821 SW 11th Ave.; Beaverton: 2625 SW Cedar Hills Blvd.). Coupons are now

available and will be through the month of September at many of the community cycling programs and events sponsored by the City of Portland Bureau of Traffic Management, The Community Cycling Center (an urban bicycle education center and bicycle repair school: 2407 NE Alberta, Portland) and by calling the WIIS office (503-643-6355). Individuals, civic or community groups can contact the WIIS office to obtain these coupons to use or distribute as part of bicycling education programs.

WIIS is a nonprofit, nonlobbying consumer insurance information and community service organization supported by the proper/casualty insurance companies in ten western states. It has been serving insurance consumers for more than 40 years.

PDC
PORTLAND
DEVELOPMENT
COMMISSION

COMMISSION MEETING

Date: July 13, 1994
Place: New Copper Penny
Restaurant
5932 SE 92nd Ave.
Portland, Oregon
Time: 7:00 p.m.

Commission meetings are open to the public. A complete agenda is available at PDC or by calling 823-3200. Citizens with disabilities may call 823-3232 or TDD 823-6868 for assistance at least 48 hours in advance.

PDC is the City of Portland's urban renewal, housing and economic development agency.