

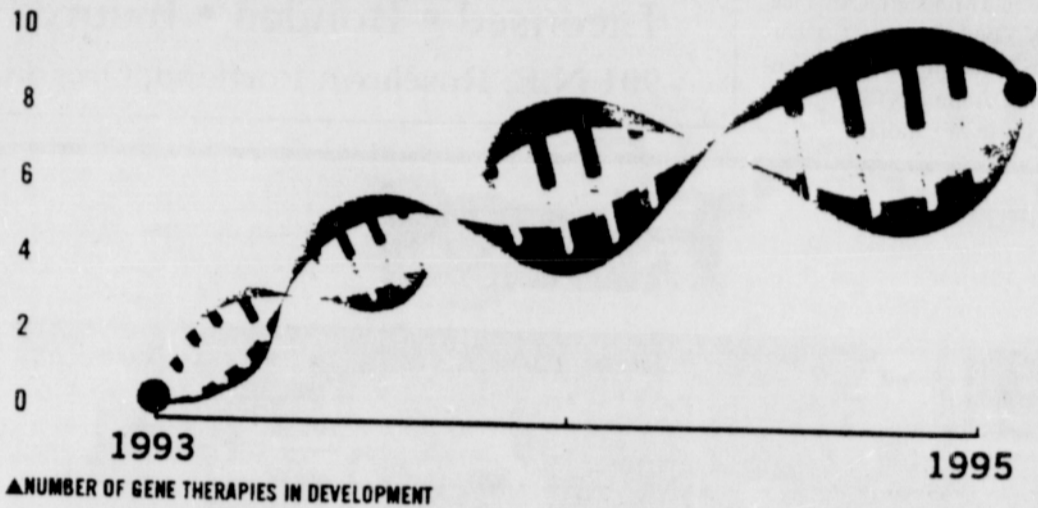
HEALTH

COSTLY INNOVATION:

The Key To New Generation Cancer Medicines

NINE NEW GENERATION GENE THERAPIES COULD PROVIDE NOVEL BREAKTHROUGHS TO FIGHT CANCER

In 1993, there were no gene therapies in human testing in the war against cancer. In 1995, there are 9 of them. With gene therapy, scientists can deal with the precise mechanisms of cancer and target medicines to specific types of the disease.



BY JOHN F. BEARY, III M.D.

The fight against cancer has taken some novel twists and turns as researchers seek to develop better drugs.

Scientists, for example, are experimenting with light that activates new medicines only after the drugs

reach cancerous cells in the body. Damage to healthy tissue can be avoided.

Researchers are also developing cancer vaccines that involve injecting dead cancerous cells into patients to stimulate the body's immune system to fight the disease

The research community is even trying to "starve" tumors by cutting off their blood supply. And it is developing pharmaceuticals that train the body's immune system to recognize and attack cancer cells. Drugs known as interferons or interleukins can activate the body's white blood

cells to kill cancerous growths.

Pharmaceutical research companies and the National Cancer Institute are exploring a wide variety of innovative ways to win the war against cancer. It is a formidable task: though progress had been made, cancer is expected to kill nearly 550,000 Americans this year.

The 98 pharmaceutical research companies involved in the effort are investing billions of dollars to research and develop 215 new medicines for 20 types of the fatal disease. About 80 of the new cancer medicines are in the final phase of human testing, and another 20 are awaiting final review by the Food and Drug Administration.

These 100 medicines are for bladder cancer, brain cancer, breast cancer, colon cancer, kidney cancer, leukemia, liver cancer, lung cancer and others.

Information on all of the 215 cancer medicines now being developed in the U.S. is available in a new PhRMA publication called "New Medicines in Development for Cancer." To get free copies, write to the Editor, "Medicines in Development," Communications Division, 1100 15th Street, NW Washington, D.C. 20005.

Bonds To Help Alzheimer's Patients

Oregon Treasurer Jim Hill has finalized the issuance of \$2 million in state financing to build a 40-unit Assisted Living Facility for low-income individuals suffering from Alzheimer's disease and related disorders.

The Assisted Living Facility will be an expansion at St. Aidan's Place in Gresham.

"I am proud of our role in helping St. Aidan's Place move forward with the unique and important facility," Hill said. "All Oregonians can be proud of this project."

The facility is intended to greatly benefit Oregonians suffering from Alzheimer's who are financially unable to care for themselves.

The state issued \$2 million in tax-exempt bonds to finance the facility. The tax-exempt feature of the bonds provides non-profit organizations the opportunity to substantially reduce borrowing costs.

St. Aidan's is a non-profit corporation associated with St. Aidan's Episcopal Church of Gresham, but accepts residents of any religious denomination or beliefs.

County, Casey Agree On Health Services

The Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services and Casey Family Programs, a private non-profit agency, have signed an agreement for mental health services for children.

The idea of a partnership, to provide behavioral health services to children, developed six years ago.

A grant from the Robert Wood Johnson foundation helped finance a pilot program aimed at helping emotionally disturbed children, using money from a number of sources, including the Children Services Division and Portland public schools.

After nearly 18 months of negotiations between the county and Casey, a contract was written to advance the county's goal of improving access to behavioral health services, county officials said.

"The collaboration between public and private sector agencies is one of the cornerstones of Multnomah County's concept of good government. This particular public/private partnership is unique as the first of its kind in delivering services to emotionally disturbed children and adolescents," said Beverly Stein, Multnomah County chairperson.

Avoiding the Threat of High Blood Pressure

BY JAMES W. REED, M.D.

High blood pressure or hypertension afflicts one out of four African Americans. It occurs earlier in life among African Americans, is more severe and is less likely to be treated adequately or early enough to prevent fatal health disorders.

Whether you're an African American man or woman, the only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to check your blood pressure regularly. Even if you look and feel fine, you can have blood pressure high enough to surprise you in

the form of a stroke, heart attack, kidney failure or even blindness. Hypertension usually has no symptoms -- that is why many call it the "silent killer."

The cause of high blood pressure is still unknown. It's believed to be caused by one or a combination of these common lifestyle behaviors: too much salt in the diet, too much stress, too much weight, and too much alcohol.

African American females are more likely to have their high blood pressure treated and controlled than

black or white males, yet the prevalence of high blood pressure among Black women is beginning to exceed that of men. And more than three times as many Black women as white women age 35-44 have the disease.

Since high blood pressure is a critical problem within the Black community, it's important for you to know the consequences of untreated high blood pressure are preventable. With proper diet, lifestyle changes and medications, you can control high blood pressure.

For example: eat healthy, re-

duce stress, drink less alcohol and visit your doctor regularly to monitor your blood pressure.

In large-scale studies, it has been shown that a greater percentage of African Americans are able to control their hypertension with pharmaceutical therapies such as calcium channel blocker or diuretics. Other categories of hypertension treatments which may also control your blood pressure are beta-blockers, ACE inhibitors, alpha blockers, central agents and vasodilator. Your doctor selects the best medication for you

from the various drug categories based on the drug's effectiveness in controlling your blood pressure, any existing medical conditions and potential drug side effects.

If you're at risk, have your blood pressure checked every few months and discuss hypertension treatment options with your doctor. Medications for treatment of high blood pressure vary, but one thing remains the same -- medicine only works if you take it. Unfortunately Black men are well-known for not seeking prop-

er diagnosis and sustaining treatment. About half of Black men being treated for high blood pressure drop out of treatment in the first year.

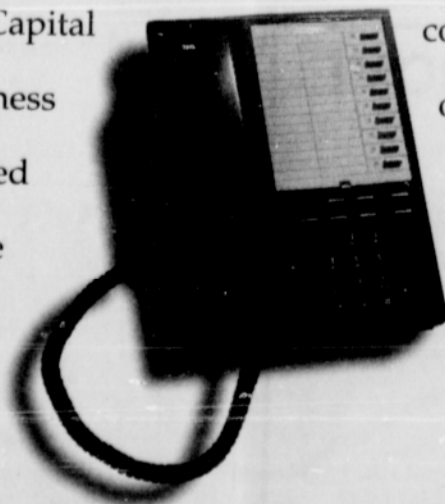
Being an educated consumer in terms of selecting blood pressure therapy will come in handy when asking your doctor about high quality, low cost alternatives. There are newer once-a-day formulations of medications available, which are priced up to 25% less than others. Being aware of your alternatives may produce savings in the long run.

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