

Untreated Pain Called Health Crisis

Doctors address disparities in pain treatment based on race



Dr. Beny Primm (from left), Dr. Lucille Perez and Dr. Gary Dennis, attend a news conference on pain management as it relates to African Americans and other minorities.

The National Medical Association has concluded that inadequate pain management is a serious national public health problem that affects millions of African Americans and other underserved minority populations.

"We are finding that African Americans, in excruciating pain due to life-threatening illness or major surgery, are denied effective pain medicine, due to factors which ultimately center on race," said Dr. Lucille C. Norville Perez, president of the NMA and associate director for the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention at the Mental Health Services Administration of the Dept. of Health and Human Services.

Fifty million Americans suffer from chronic pain. Costs associated with prolonged pain total approximately \$100 billion a year.

The NMA, which represents the collective voice of 25,000 African American physicians, is evaluat-

ing the significance of chronic pain to the health and well being of all Americans, and in particular, disparities in pain treatment based on race. The Association will issue its final report on pain management in March.

The group's preliminary findings show that pain causes more disability than cancer and heart disease combined. The studies also indicate that racial and ethnic minority populations are at higher risk for receiving ineffective treatment for chronic and severe pain and that some doctors appear to be fearful of prescribing certain medications because of concerns relating to drug abuse in minority populations.

The association warns that racial profiling is more prevalent in pharmacies located in urban areas. These pharmacies either refuse to carry certain opioid medications, citing low demand, the potential

for fraud, fear of being robbed, or a belief that certain prescriptions are being diverted for illegal use.

The association wants more pain management training in medical schools and related health education programs, a public health education program that fosters greater understanding of pain management, along with prevention of abuse and illegal drug trafficking; and on data collection as a means to better identify the reasons for racial disparities in pain management.

"The NMA will assess the major factors that result in lack of access to effective, pain-relieving medication, especially with regard to minorities, and will devise courses of action that will enable more people to have access to quality health care and proper pain control," said Dr. Gary Dennis, past president of the NMA and chief of neurosurgery at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C.

New Homeowners Offered \$1,000

The Department of Housing and Urban Development announced July 30 that it will issue a \$1,000 check to homebuyers who sign a sales contract on a single-family HUD Home by Sept. 30.

The \$1,000 Cash Back Move-In Allowance, which is effective immediately, will be issued at closing and can be used by the homebuyer for any expenses such as moving costs and home repairs. To qualify, the buyer must agree to live in the property as his or her primary residence for a minimum of 12 months.

"The Bush Administration is

committed to increasing the number of Americans, particularly minorities, who own their own homes," said HUD Secretary Mel Martinez. "We believe this incentive program will help more people become first-time homebuyers by purchasing one of HUD's single-family homes."

Under the conditions of the incentive, the buyer must close the sale transaction within 30 days after the contract is accepted.

There are approximately 30,000 single-family homes in HUD's inventory of properties, and they can usually be found in every state

as well as Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands. Interested parties should log onto www.HUD.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/reo/homes.cfm to get information about the availability of HUD Homes in their area.

All HUD Homes are offered for sale at market value as established by an appraisal. Since the properties are sold "as is," there is often an opportunity for a homebuyer to earn "sweat equity" by making repairs after the sale.

The bidding for available properties is conducted exclusively on the Internet.

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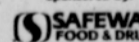
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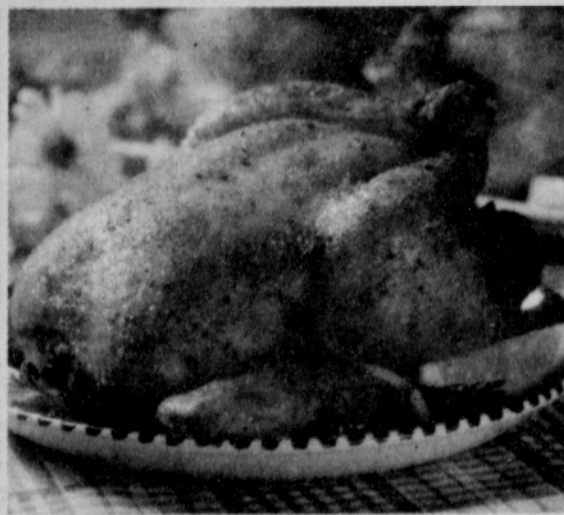
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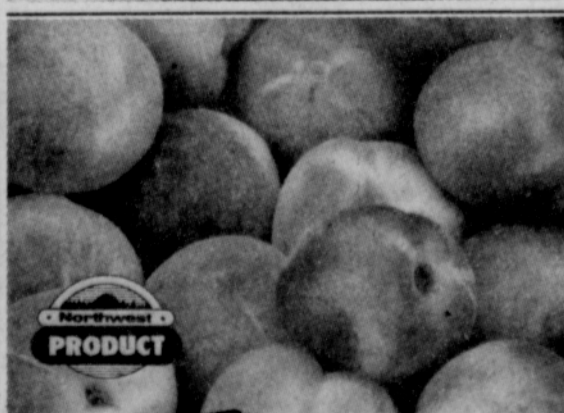


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