

HEALTH

Study: Skewed AIDS Beliefs

Carelessness with protection hurts minorities

Bogus ideas about HIV/AIDS are costing the lives of many who go unprotected. A new study suggests that many African Americans are distrustful of the government's role in the origin and treatment of HIV/AIDS — and that black men who have such beliefs also have more negative attitudes toward condoms and use them less consistently.

The study was funded by the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development.

"These 'conspiracy theories' have been out there for a while and are part of a larger distrust of government, as well as of medical and public health institutions, by many

African Americans," said Sheryl Thorburn, an associate professor of public health at Oregon State University and co-author of the study.

The researchers conducted a national telephone survey with 500 randomly selected African Americans, ages 15-44. Included in the survey were questions about HIV/AIDS beliefs, attitudes toward condoms, and condom use.

More than half (53.4 percent) of those surveyed said they believe that there is a cure for AIDS, but that it is being withheld from the poor. Only 37 percent felt that the government was telling the truth about AIDS.

Among the other findings were that 43.6 percent of African Ameri-

cans surveyed felt that people who take new medicines for HIV are human guinea pigs for the government; 26.6 percent said AIDS was produced in a government laboratory; 48.2 percent believed that HIV is a man-made virus; and 15.2 percent said AIDS is a form of genocide against blacks.

The study found that conspiracy beliefs were associated with negative attitudes toward condoms and with inconsistent condom use among African American men. The researchers did not find the same results for women in the survey.

Researchers believe that HIV/AIDS conspiracy beliefs stem from well-documented racial discrimination and disparities in health care — as well as past examples of unethical research, including the infam-

ous Tuskegee Syphilis Study in the mid-20th century, the authors say.

In the Tuskegee study, which took place from 1932-72, the U.S. Public Health Service studied the effects of untreated syphilis in nearly 400 low-income African American males from rural Alabama. The men were told they were being treated for "bad blood" and were denied treatment for the disease.

"Public health professionals need to acknowledge conspiracy beliefs and work toward addressing them," Bogart said. "It is critical to have people from the community delivering messages about HIV/AIDS transmission and prevention methods."

African Americans have a disproportionately high rate of HIV and AIDS, the authors point out, and addressing barriers to prevention is critical in changing that trend.



Oregon Health Forum Honors Two Women

Sen. Jackie Winters, R-Salem and Sen. Margaret Carter, D-Portland, are being honored for their efforts to improve health care for Oregonians with health care achievement awards from the Oregon Health Forum, a statewide health advocacy association.

The group praised Winters for being an advocate for human services funding, for understanding of the intricacies of the Department of Human Services budget and for supporting senior services.



Jackie Winters



Margaret Carter

Carter, the first American-American woman in the house in 1984, was praised for her service on state health policy committees, creating a permanent state Head Start program and being influential in founding the Oregon Youth Conservation Corps. She has worked as a counselor for women in prison and was a counselor at Portland Community College for 25 years, where she founded the Portland Community College Skills Center.

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Remembering the Vanport Flood: After a deadly flood on the Columbia River in 1948 when a dike broke, almost 20,000 residents of the now defunct city of Vanport were displaced, with 15 people confirmed dead. Vanport, the largest public housing project ever built in the United States, was a revolutionary community, crossing color lines and ridding its area of segregation. Mrs. Lizzie Phillips (above) and her children were one family left without a home.

Photo memories from past wanted

Black History Month is here and the Portland Observer would like to share your personal photo memories from the past in our special coverage all month long.

Please stop by our offices at 4747 N.E. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. or email images to news@portlandobserver.com with information about the photo along with your name and telephone number. Photos will be returned.

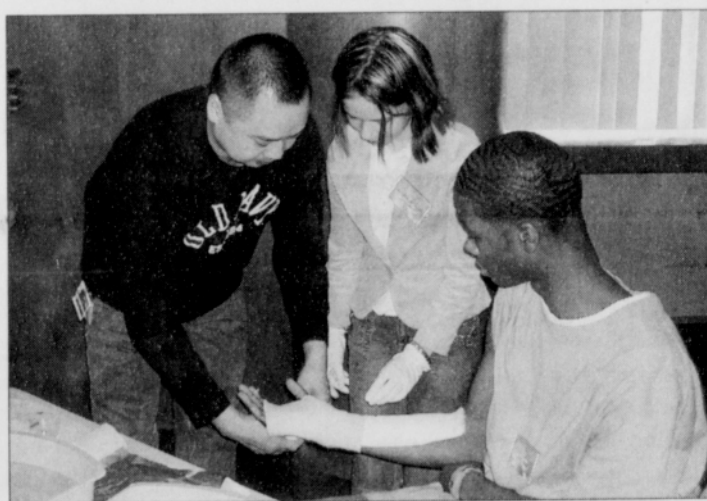
Health Careers Explored at OHSU

College students interested in health care professions are invited to attend a career conference sponsored by Oregon Health and Science University Center for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs.

The educational and interactive conference will give the students an opportunity to explore the many possibilities for their future career. The goal is to increase underrepresented minorities and disadvantaged students in the health and science professions and to increase prospective students' awareness of OHSU's educational programs, faculty, resources and campus life.

The fifth annual Health, Science, & Engineering Careers Conference will be held on Friday, Feb. 25, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at OHSU Marquam Hill Campus.

This year's key note speaker will be Dr. Marian Mehegan who serves as the U.S. Public Health Service Region X associate regional health administrator for women's health. For more information or to register for this event, contact the OHSU Center for Diversity and Multicultural Affairs by calling 503-494-5657, e-mail at cedma@ohsu.edu or register online at www.ohsu.edu/academic/diversity.



Students Explore Medical Careers

Ladarius Tidmer, 16, plays the patient in an emergency department class on splinting broken bones. Providence Portland Medical Center Emergency Department technician Robert Eaglin (left) demonstrates the wrapping technique as Vancouver middle school student Chelsea Dalgord observes the procedure. About 30 students attended the recent career day event.

Mentorships Available

High school juniors interested in health careers are encouraged to apply to the CURE Project, a summer program of research mentorship training for disadvantaged students at Oregon Health and Science University.

The project, which begins June 27, will have students work in research laboratories under the guidance of scientists conducting cancer research for a minimum of eight weeks.

Students who are accepted will be paid minimum wage and will receive bus passes for the duration of the summer project.

Applications are due by Friday, Feb. 18, and are available online at www.ohsu.edu/academic/diversity or by calling 503-494-5657.



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