

Diabetes More Prevalent Among African Americans Experts Say Education, Control Key To Reducing Health Complications

(NAPSA)—More than 17 million people in the United States, or 6.2 percent of the population, have diabetes. While an estimated 13 million have been diagnosed, at least 5.2 million people (or one-third) are unaware that they have the disease.

Despite efforts by the health-care professionals and the community to control the diabetes epidemic, the statistics for Americans, particularly African Americans, are alarming. African Americans are twice as likely to have diabetes than Caucasians. Approximately 2.8 million of all African Americans have diabetes—that's 13 percent of the African-American population.

In Detroit for example, more than 60,150 people have been diagnosed with diabetes. Diabetes is the second leading diagnosis for hospitalization in Detroit and accounted for approximately 10.8 percent of all preventable hospitalizations in 1999. In 2000, African Americans' death rates in Detroit due to diabetes were 127 (rate per 1000) compared to 91 for Caucasians.

However, studies show that through the use of insulin and other medications, people with diabetes can maintain tight glucose control, defined as an A1C of less than seven percent, and help reduce the risk of diabetes-related complications including heart disease, blindness, amputation, kidney failure and death.

A1C, short for the hemoglobin A1C test, measures a person's average blood glucose, or sugar, level over a two- to three-month period. Unlike daily glucose monitoring which provides day-to-day



patterns of glucose levels, A1C provides the “big picture” of long-term glucose control. In other words, while your home blood glucose testing kit tells you what your level is at that moment, the A1C gives a more accurate picture of how well you are controlling your diabetes over a longer period of time.

Evidence shows that reaching a target A1C of less than seven percent is achievable, yet only 43 percent of Americans with diabetes are achieving this goal despite the availability of tools to help them monitor and manage glucose levels.

The benefits of reaching an A1C of less than seven are substantial:

- Knowing your A1C level and keeping it under control can help to prevent serious diabetes-related complications including blindness, amputation, heart disease, stroke, and kidney damage.

- Diabetes also represents an enormous drain on the nation's health resources with annual healthcare costs exceeding \$132 billion.

All people with diabetes should have an A1C test at least twice a year. For more information, log onto www.diabeteswatch.com/a1c.