

# Health NEWS YOU CAN USE

## Progress In Fight Against Hepatitis

(NAPSA)—To educate and prevent hepatitis among African-Americans, the National Medical Association is calling for universal vaccination, increased education, advocacy efforts and ongoing surveillance and research. Hepatitis is a serious and potentially fatal liver disease.

“Hepatitis A, B and C are serious and often debilitating diseases that have reached epidemic proportions in the African-American community,” said Dr. Lucille C. Norville Perez, president of the National Medical Association. “Our goal is to partner with other leading organizations to increase education, prevention and access to treatment to eradicate hepatitis within the African-American community and beyond.”

According to Dr. Joan Buffington, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it is estimated that among adolescents, African-Americans are three to four times more likely than Whites to have a hepatitis B infection. It is estimated that 1.25 million Americans are chronically infected with hepatitis B, which is spread through infected blood or body fluids, sexual contact, IV drug use, contact sports, body piercing and tattooing.

Hepatitis A infects 180,000 Americans each year. It is spread by fecal-oral route through close person-to-person contact, or by ingesting contaminated food or water.

Hepatitis A and B are both pre-



**A leading African-American doctors, group has issued guidelines to educate and prevent hepatitis.**

ventable through vaccination. Hepatitis C, the nation's most common bloodborne infection, chronically affects an estimated three million Americans. It is predominantly spread through contact with infected blood and can result in liver cancer, cirrhosis or failure. Unlike hepatitis A and B, there is no vaccination for hepatitis C.

So that more African-American youth and adults are aware of their susceptibility to the hepatitis A, B, and C viruses, the National Medical Association released a consensus paper titled, *Promoting Prevention of Viral Hepatitis in the African-American Community*.

More information about the fight against hepatitis is available by visiting [www.nmanet.org](http://www.nmanet.org).