

ROAD TO SAFETY

Reducing Traffic-Related Injury And Death

(NAPSA)—While no amount of traffic-related injury and death is acceptable, some communities seem to suffer more than others.

A recent survey of hospital emergency room visits showed that motor vehicle crashes accounted for 779,000 visits per year for African Americans, at a rate of 24 per 1,000 people, compared to 14 per 1,000 for whites.

The picture is especially grim for young black males. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for blacks through the age of 14. They are the second leading cause of death between the ages of 15 and 24, surpassed only by homicide.

Black children, ages 5 through 12 face a risk of dying in a motor vehicle crash that is almost three times as great as white children.

Aside from the tragedy of lost life, the cost to the public, in terms of both safety and money, is significant.

One reason for the disparity in traffic injuries and deaths may be a disproportionate use of seat belts, say experts at the National Medical Association (NMA), which promotes the collective interests of physicians and patients of African descent.

According to a recent NHTSA survey, observed seat belt use among African Americans is more than 10 percent lower than the national average.

The regular use of seat belts has been shown to protect drivers and their passengers but cam-



Research confirms that safety belt use remains lower among African Americans as a whole.

paigns to educate minority groups about the effectiveness of using seat belts have enjoyed only limited success.

That's where the NMA sees African American physicians as having a unique opportunity for leadership within the minority community.

During patient visits, physicians can help to spread the message that the use of seat belts and child safety seats can save lives.

Past campaigns may have failed to reach their target audience because of techniques and messages that are culturally sensitive to African Americans and may have targeted areas where they are not broadly present.

The NMA is a leading voice for parity in medicine, elimination of health disparities and promotion of optimal health.