

National Black Church Initiative

P.O. Box 65177
Washington, DC 20035
202-744-0184
dcpci2002@gmail.com
www.naltblackchurch.com

Contact:
Rev. Anthony Evans
202-744-0184

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The National Black Church Initiative Launches Innovative Multiple Myeloma Health Prevention Campaign

Washington, D.C. – The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI), a faith-based coalition of 34,000 churches comprised of 15 denominations and 15.7 million African Americans, proudly announces the kick-off of an educational health campaign to increase awareness about multiple myeloma within the African American community.

Rev. Anthony Evans, President of NBCI says, “The National Black Church Initiative is proud to partner with Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation (“Novartis”) to increase awareness about this little known disease. The objective of this multiple myeloma campaign is to heighten awareness within the African American community. We believe that education empowers our parishioners to take the necessary actions to maintain bone health. It is imperative that those affected by multiple myeloma and their families follow the preventive behaviors illustrated in this campaign and to seek the advice of their physician to protect and improve bone health.”

NBCI endeavors to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment and has been a leader in the faith-based community for more than 20 years. NBCI’s mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. The National Black Church Initiative’s methodology is utilizing faith and sound health science.

This Multiple Myeloma Initiative falls under our Health Emergency Declaration (HED), an initiative that we believe to be our lifelong work. HED is a seven-year, programmatic preventive health campaign launched in faith-based communities nationwide to change the landscape of U.S. healthcare and dramatically transform the current African American health paradigm. A significant element of our HED programming is to address the high incidence rates of cancers within the African American community and to implement innovative cancer prevention strategies nationwide. Please visit our website for more information about HED and our Health Initiatives at <http://www.naltblackchurch.com/health/>.

Multiple myeloma is an incurable blood cancer of the plasma cells, a type of white blood cell found in the bone marrow. This disease can lead to bone problems including pain, fractures and spinal cord compression, when cancer cells wear away the bone. Nearly 95% of advanced stage multiple myeloma patients' disease spreads to their bones, giving rise to a variety of symptoms. For patients suffering from multiple myeloma, bone lesions may cause debilitating skeletal related complications and may impact a patient's quality of life and that of their caregiver. The earlier any lesion is diagnosed, the more likely it can be effectively managed.

This program is a response to the disproportionate impact of multiple myeloma on African Americans and statistics illustrate the necessity of implementing a national educational health campaign for this at risk population. In the US, multiple myeloma is the second most common blood cancer and an estimated 70,000 Americans are living with the disease. Myeloma was the ninth most commonly diagnosed cancer among African American men and the seventh most commonly diagnosed cancer among African American women, from 2003 to 2007. Additionally, African Americans have more than twice the incidence rate of multiple myeloma than Caucasians.

Compounding the impact of the high incidence rate within the African American community, the mortality rate for multiple myeloma in the US is two times higher in the African American population than that in the Caucasian population. The five-year relative survival rate for multiple myeloma is approximately 38 percent, one of the lowest of all cancers. Unfortunately, despite medical advances over the past decade, the average patient will live only three to four years after diagnosis.

NBCI's response to these grim statistics is a comprehensive, targeted campaign to educate African Americans about this debilitating disease and implement preventive health habits. Our partnership with Novartis strengthens our ability to enact change and dramatically improve the lives of African Americans nationwide. *To Stay in the Game, Maintain Your Frame* is a multi-faceted program to educate African Americans with multiple myeloma about the need for doctor-patient dialogue about their condition and how to become active participants in their health. Elements of the program include patient education materials and tips for better bone health, as well as short videos demonstrating how to perform activities of daily living that may help reduce the risk of falls and other skeletal injuries.

About NBCI

The National Black Church Initiative (NBCI) is a coalition of 34,000 African American and Latino churches working to eradicate racial disparities in healthcare, technology, education, housing, and the environment. NBCI's mission is to provide critical wellness information to all of its members, congregants, churches and the public. NBCI offers faith-based, out-of-the-box and cutting edge solutions to stubborn economic and social issues. NBCI's programs are governed by credible statistical analysis, science based strategies and techniques, and methods that work. Visit our website at www.naltblackchurch.com.

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