

# ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

## Thyroid Awareness Month

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

### Small Body Systems Have a Big Impact on Our Health

January can be a time of reflection, a time of resolution, or a time of realignment. As we start off the year I want to remind you that, just as small changes can make a big impact on your life and your health, small body parts or systems that we normally don't pay attention to also have a big impact on our overall wellness.

The thyroid is one of those small organs most people really don't think about. However, more than 12% of the US population will develop a thyroid condition during their lifetime.

#### Did You Know?

- An estimated 20 million Americans have some form of thyroid disease.
- Up to 60% of those with thyroid disease are unaware of their condition.
- Women are 5 to 8 times more likely than men to have thyroid problems.
- One woman in eight will develop a thyroid disorder during her lifetime.
- Most thyroid cancers respond to treatment, although a small percentage can be very aggressive.
- The causes of thyroid problems are largely unknown.
- Undiagnosed thyroid disease may put patients at risk for cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, and infertility.
- Pregnant women with undiagnosed hypothyroidism have an increased risk of miscarriage, preterm delivery, and severe developmental problems in their children.
- Most thyroid diseases are life-long conditions that can be managed with medical attention.

#### Facts about the Thyroid Gland and Thyroid Disease

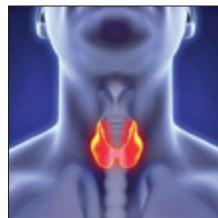
The thyroid is a hormone-producing gland that regulates the body's metabolism—the rate at which the body produces energy from nutrients and oxygen. It affects critical body functions, such as energy level and heart rate.

The thyroid gland is located in the middle of the lower neck. Although the gland is relatively small, it produces a hormone that influences every cell, tissue, and organ in the body.

Hypothyroidism is a condition where the thyroid gland does not pro-



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Pro16 Productions



The thyroid gland.

duce enough thyroid hormone. Symptoms include extreme fatigue, depression, forgetfulness, and some weight gain.

Hyperthyroidism, another form of thyroid disease, is a condition causing the gland to produce too much thyroid hormone. Symptoms include irritability, nervousness, muscle weakness, unexplained weight loss, sleep disturbances, vision problems, and eye irritation.

Graves' disease is a type of hyperthyroidism; it is an autoimmune disorder that is genetic and estimated to affect 1% of the population.

Although Graves' disease may affect anyone, it's more common among women, and in people younger than age 40. Signs and symptoms of Graves' disease can include:

- Anxiety and irritability
- A fine tremor of the hands or fingers
- Heat sensitivity and an increase in perspiration or warm, moist skin
- Weight loss
- Enlargement of the thyroid gland (goiter)
- Change in menstrual cycles
- Erectile dysfunction or reduced libido
- Frequent bowel movements
- Fatigue
- Thick, red skin usually on the shins or tops of the feet (Graves' dermopathy)
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Sleep disturbance
- Bulging eyes

Bulging eyes (Graves' ophthalmopathy) is one of the visual signs and it is interesting to understand what causes it. Graves' ophthalmopathy results from a buildup of certain carbohydrates in the muscles and tissues behind the eyes. It appears that the same antibody that can cause thyroid dysfunction may also have an "attraction" to tissues surrounding the eyes.

Graves' ophthalmopathy often appears at the same time as hyperthyroidism or several months later. But signs and symptoms may appear years before or after the onset of hyperthyroidism.

It has often been said that "knowing" is half the battle. ABIPA's goal is to insure that we share information and education that will have a positive impact on your health as our community friend, and on the overall health of the community as a whole.

**We look forward to sharing more in 2024!**

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ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.



CELEBRATING 19 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

#### Help Us Celebrate Our Birthday by Gifting ABIPA a Donation of \$19

Tax deductible donations can be made by sending a check to ABIPA, PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802; or online at [www.abipa.org](http://www.abipa.org). Thank you for your support!



Kelly White, MHE, MPH. Photo: Pro16 Productions

## Creating Healthy Resolutions

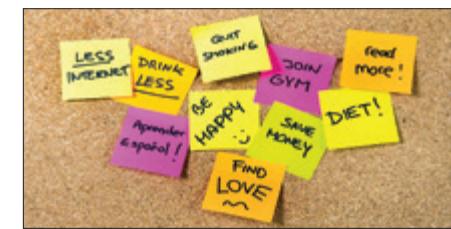
by Kelly White, MHE, MPH, ABIPA Health Education Program Manager

**Resolutions can be seen as goals or objectives that you would like to accomplish sometime during the year.**

The beginning of the year is significant because it signifies a new start and a chance to start over on something you may not have done so well with in the prior year.

This year, think about what you would like to do to make your health a little better than it was last year, or something that you would like to add to your current health. Health and wellness are all about doing what you can to keep yourself from injury and illness and being in overall good health. This trend can start with making simple changes to your everyday lifestyle. The great part about it is that you do not have to change your entire life to achieve your goal. It is ok to start out with something small that will not shake up your entire life.

Studies show that most resolutions are broken within the first couple of weeks because they are unsustainable. Too much pressure is placed on getting it right, causing most people to make the exact same resolution as the previous year. So, when making your resolution this year, think about how you can sim-



ply improve your life and make changes that will last a lifetime.

Some nontraditional examples could include things like:

- Calling and scheduling your yearly check up with your primary care physician, or see your physician on a regular schedule.
- Get your age-appropriate preventive health screenings: colonoscopy, mammogram, etc.
- Get more quality sleep.
- Focusing on mental health and seeking help as needed.
- Take more "me time" and practice self-care.

Try to create healthy resolutions that can change your life and put you on the path to a longer life.

## ABIPA Announcements

### Wellness Wednesdays

**Linwood Crump Shiloh** – Held on the 1st & 2nd Wednesday from 12 noon to 1 p.m. at the Linwood Crump Shiloh Recreation Complex.

**Maple Crest** – Held every Wednesday from 2:30 to 4 p.m. in Building 20 in the Community Room.

### Wellness Weekend

#### Sunday, February 4

Held from 2-4 p.m. at the Linwood Crump Shiloh Recreation Complex.

### 2024 PRAISE Resurgence Planning Luncheon

If your congregation participated in the past, or if you are interested in learning how your church can get involved, we look forward to seeing you.

If you plan on attending, please RSVP by emailing [jewana@abipa.org](mailto:jewana@abipa.org) or send a text to 828-778-7122.

Listen to ABIPA's Body & Soul Radio Show on WRES 100.7 FM, Tuesdays and Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. on [wresfm.com](http://wresfm.com).

