

ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

Prostate Cancer Awareness

Important for the Men in Our Lives

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

Prostate cancer remains the most commonly diagnosed cancer among Black men in the United States. Black men also have the highest prostate cancer death rate of any racial or ethnic group and are more than twice as likely to die from the disease as White men.

This disparity reflects unequal access to high quality treatment options. Encouragingly, evidence shows that when treated within an equal access health care system, such as the Veterans Health Administration, Black men have equivalent or even higher prostate cancer specific survival rates.

Risk and Statistics

Higher Incidence: About 1 in 6 Black men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer in their lifetimes.

Increased Mortality: Death rates are more than double those of White men, driven by biological, genetic, and systemic healthcare factors.

Earlier Onset: The disease often develops earlier and may grow more aggressively in Black men.

Causes and Contributing Factors

Biological and Genetic Differences: Research suggests that inherited traits and tumor biology may contribute to faster cancer progression.

Social and Environmental

Barriers: Unequal access to high quality care, treatment delays, and socioeconomic challenges compound risk.

General Risk Factors: Age, family history of prostate or breast cancer, diet, and obesity also influence risk.

Prevention and Early Detection

The PSA blood test is the primary screening tool for prostate cancer and can detect disease before symptoms appear. However, the Digital Rectal Exam (DRE) remains an important companion test because it can identify abnormalities that a PSA test may miss.

Some aggressive prostate cancers do



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Red Angle Photography

not shed much PSA protein into the blood...a patient might have a normal PSA level, but a DRE can reveal an abnormal physical lump.

Why the DRE Matters

Detects PSA Negative Cancers: Some tumors do not produce much PSA, making physical examination essential.

Identifies Physical Changes: Doctors check for hard areas, irregular bumps, asymmetry, or overall firmness in the prostate.

Assists in Staging: Feeling whether the gland has hardened or whether surrounding tissues are affected helps estimate disease advancement.

Medical organizations agree that the DRE should not be used alone, as it can miss early stage tumors. Its greatest value comes when paired with the PSA test, especially for African American men, who face higher risk at younger ages.

Symptoms

No Early Symptoms: Early stage prostate cancer rarely causes noticeable symptoms, making routine screening crucial.

Advanced Symptoms: Weak urine flow, frequent urination, blood in urine or semen, pelvic discomfort, or bone pain may appear in later stages.

Trends and Recommendations

After declining through the late 2000s and early 2010s, prostate cancer incidence has risen over the past decade. Distant stage diagnoses have increased among men of all ages, climbing nearly 3% annually among those younger than 55. Men at higher risk include African American men and those with a first degree relative diagnosed with prostate cancer.

Experts recommend that African American men begin discussing prostate cancer screening with their doctor starting at age 40 to 45.

There is encouraging news: deaths from prostate cancer have been steadily declining due to improved treatment, better management of recurrent disease, and early detection through PSA testing. Among Black men, prostate cancer deaths have dropped 56% since their peak in 1993.

Keep talking to the important men in your lives. Encourage them to get screened, stay informed, and prioritize their health. They are invaluable to our families and our community

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 22 Years of Being the Community Health Connection for Asheville and Beyond

Help Us Celebrate Our Birthday by Gifting ABIPA a Donation of \$22

Tax-deductible donations can be made by sending a check to ABIPA, PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802, or donate online at www.abipa.org. Thank you for your support!



JaiEssence McEachin, MPH. Photo: Red Angle Photography

The Black Panther Party and Sickle Cell Disease

Early advocates for public health.

by JaiEssence McEachin, MPH

When most people think of the Black Panther Party, images of Black activists in leather jackets “fighting the power” often come to mind. Few realize the Panthers were also early advocates for public health, especially in the fight against sickle cell disease (SCD).

Western medicine first documented SCD in 1910, when Dr. James Herrick and Ernest Irons identified sickle-shaped red blood cells in a patient from Grenada. In 1949, chemist Linus Pauling and colleagues linked sickle cell anemia to abnormal hemoglobin, establishing it as the first recognized molecular disease. Despite this breakthrough, research funding and public attention remained limited for decades.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, sickle cell anemia was still largely overlooked by mainstream healthcare systems. The Black Panther Party stepped in, making sickle cell education and screening part of its community health mission. Through free clinics and neighborhood outreach, the Panthers helped bring national attention to a disease disproportionately affecting Black Americans.

However, early screening efforts often failed to distinguish between sickle cell disease, caused by inheriting two sickle cell genes, and sickle cell trait, which occurs when a person inherits one gene and usually does not develop the disease. This confusion led to stigma, employment discrimination, insurance barriers, and raised concerns about racial profiling and medical discrimination.

In 1972, President Richard Nixon signed the National Sickle Cell Anemia Control Act, expanding federal support for research, education, and treatment. Today, universal newborn screening ensures early detection, and modern testing accurately identifies both disease and trait. Sickle cell disease affects about 100,000 people in the US and occurs in roughly 1 in 365 Black births.

The Panthers showed how organized communities can shape health policy and awareness. This month, we invite you to join the Red Cross Blood Drive at Tried Stone Missionary Baptist Church on September 19. Share information about sickle cell disease, donate blood, or simply start a conversation with family and friends. Awareness is powerful, but action changes lives.

Upcoming Events

Walk Your Way to Health

Saturday, September 26

Asheville Chapter of The Links, Inc. is hosting a wellness-focused event from 10 a.m. until 12 noon at Linwood Crump Shiloh Community Center, 121 Shiloh Road in Asheville. Participants can register in teams of four and compete for cash prizes totaling \$500. The event will also feature voter registration and free blood pressure checks.



Sunday Shop

Sunday, September 27

Shop for free supplies from 3-6 p.m. at the Friendship Center, 142 Shiloh Road in Asheville.

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

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