

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Healthbeat

Drug industry backing Obama's health reform efforts

WASHINGTON (AP) - The nation's drugmakers stand ready to spend \$150 million to help President Barack Obama overhaul health care this fall, according to numerous officials, a staggering sum that could dwarf attempts to derail his chief domestic priority.

The White House and allies in Congress are well aware of the effort by Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, a somewhat surprising political alliance, given the industry's recent history of siding with Republicans and the Democrats' disdain for special interests.

The campaign, now in its early stages, includes television advertising under PhRMA's own name and commercials aired in conjunction with the liberal group, Families USA.

Numerous people with knowledge of PhRMA's plans said they had been told it would likely reach \$150 million and perhaps \$200 million. They spoke on condition of anonymity, saying they were not authorized to divulge details.

Additionally, the industry is the major contributor to Healthy Economy Now, which recently completed a \$12 million round of advertising nationally and in several states. The ads were made by companies with close ties to Democrats and the White House and generally reflected the administration's changing rhetoric on health care.

In an interview, Ken Johnson, senior vice president of PhRMA, said, "We will have a significant presence over the August recess, both on television and newspapers and on radio, but we have not finalized details for our fall campaign."



Johnson

Some BP drugs may protect against dementia, study shows

A particular class of medication used to treat high blood pressure could protect older adults against memory decline and other impairments in cognitive function, according to a newly published study from Wake Forest University School of Medicine.

Research suggests that some of the drugs classified as angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, specifically those types of ACE inhibitors that affect the brain by crossing the blood-brain barrier, may reduce inflammation that could contribute to the development of Alzheimer's disease, a major cause of dementia.

The study appears in the current issue of Archives of Internal Medicine.

"High blood pressure is an important risk factor for Alzheimer's disease and vascular dementia," said Dr. Kaycee Sink, lead author of the study, geriatrician and an assistant professor of internal medicine - gerontology. "Our study found that all blood pressure medications may not be equal when it comes to reducing the risk of dementia in patients with hypertension."

Dementia is the broad term used to describe conditions in the brain that cause loss of brain function.

Some ACE inhibitors are known as "centrally-acting" because they can cross the blood-brain barrier, a specialized system of tiny blood vessels that protects the brain from harmful substances in the blood stream. Centrally-acting ACE inhibitors include Capoten, Monopril, Zestril, Aceon, Altace and Mavik.

HIV transmission prevention in newly infected to be probed

A team of researchers from the UNC Institute for Global Health & Infectious Diseases has received a \$3.5 million grant from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, part of the National Institutes of Health, to study HIV prevention methods among people with acute HIV infection (AHI).

The four-year study will involve developing a new program that identifies and informs people with acute HIV infection, and implementing and evaluating combined behavioral and antiretroviral therapy interventions. The research will be conducted at UNC

Project, the institute's research, care and training facility in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Acute HIV infection is the period between infection and detection of HIV antibodies and lasts up to 12 weeks. During this brief window of time, the virus replicates rapidly, and the probability of transmission is very high. People in this stage of the disease may be responsible for a

substantial proportion of onward transmission of HIV infection, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, said Dr. William Miller, co-principal investigator of the study.

"There is no 'magic bullet' to prevent HIV infection," said Miller, associate professor of medicine and epidemiology in the School of Medicine and the Gillings School of Global Public Health, respectively. "Successful prevention programs will require combining prevention strategies. In this study we will try to reduce transmission from newly infected people."

Audrey Pettifor, Ph.D., the study's other co-principal investigator and assistant professor of epidemiology in the public health school, said identifying people with AHI and intervening to reduce onward transmission represented a tantalizing, but until now untested and unproven, opportunity for HIV prevention.



Miller

Free prostate cancer screenings offered

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

The Downtown Health Plaza, 1200 Martin Luther King Jr. Drive., will offer free prostate cancer screenings - on Thursday, Sept. 17 and Saturday, Sept. 19. The Sept. 17 screenings will be conducted from 6 - 8 p.m., by appointment only. Schedule an appointment by calling 336-716-2255. The Sept. 19 screening, from 7-9 a.m., will be conducted on a walk-in basis with no appointments necessary.

Screening is recommended for men over age 50 who haven't had a prostate exam in the last year; and for men over 40 who are black or have a family history of prostate cancer.

Prostate cancer is the third leading cause of cancer deaths among men, but if detected early, is highly treatable.

The screenings will be conducted by physicians from Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center's Department of Urology.



Local aerobics instructor stars in sweaty NBTFF production

Theater-fans started days off with Gospel Hip Hop

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

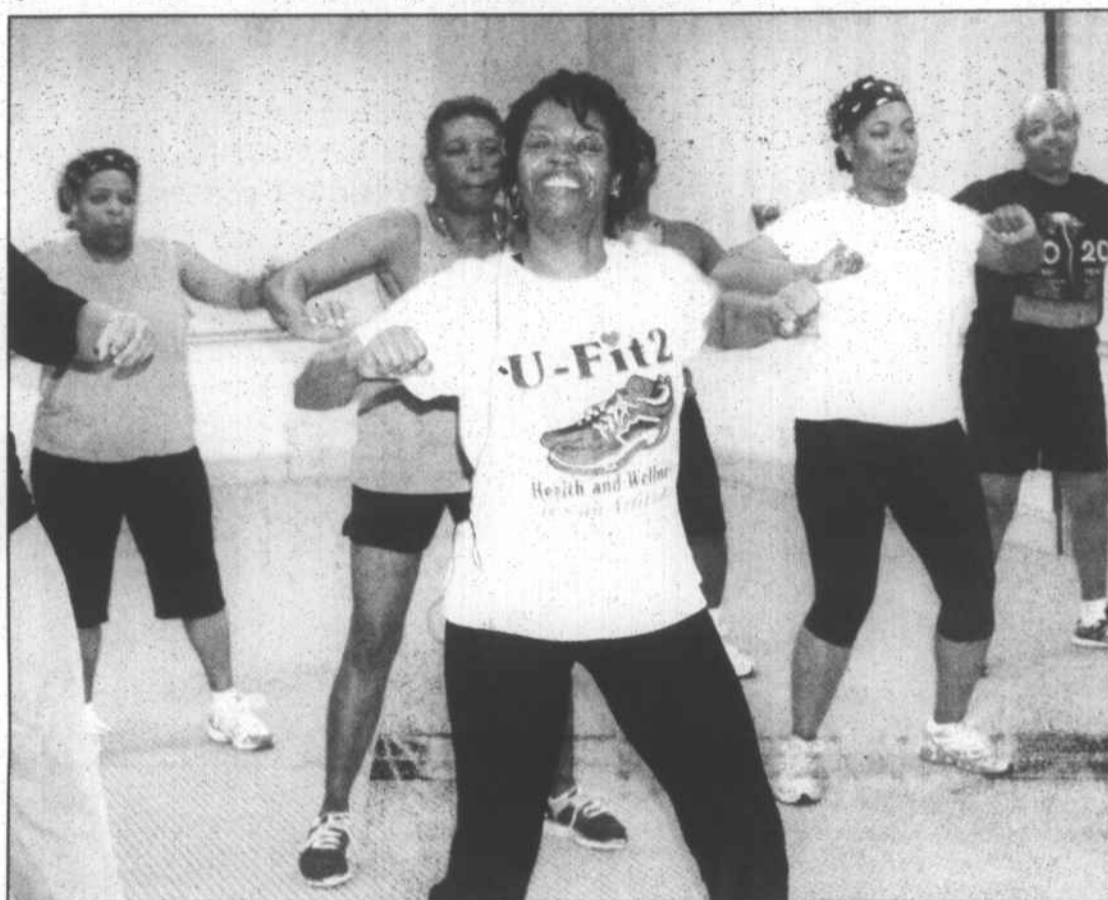
National Black Theatre Festival is jam-packed with plays, parties, receptions and workshops, but many attendees still found time to exercise.

In fact, a series of morning Gospel Hip-Hop workouts led by local fitness guru Sharon Cunningham turned out to be one of the most popular components of the 2009 festival, which ended its week-long run on Aug. 8.

Dozens joined Cunningham in the Ardmore Room of the Embassy Suites on the mornings of Aug. 4, Aug. 5 and Aug. 6 for the hour-and-a-half-long sessions. Buoyed by Cunningham's words of encouragement, they took on the high-energy, high-spirited workouts with big smiles and tons of enthusiasm.

Gospel Hip-Hop, which Cunningham says is for those from 6-year-old to 60 and above, was designed by Cunningham as a way to get people exercising while improving their physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. The routines combine dance with moves that burn calories, build muscle and increase flexibility. Those who have taken part say the workouts are so fun and lively that it's hard to believe that it is an actual workout routine.

Cunningham - the former



Sharon Cunningham leads a Gospel Hip Hop session during the NBTFF.

Photo by Bob Brower

host of a popular public access television exercise program - owns and operates U-Fit 2 Health and Wellness, which has just kicked off its Wellness Warrior program.

Wellness Warrior will offer healthy solutions for the physi-

cally inactive and for those trying to improve their health. Cunningham will work with local churches to implement the program. She already regularly leads workout routines at places of worship throughout the Triad.

For more information about Wellness Warrior, call Cunningham at 336-529-8775 or e-mail her at u_fit2@yahoo.com.

Recession means fewer U.S. births

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

ATLANTA - There aren't just fewer jobs in a recession. There are fewer babies, too. U.S. births fell in 2008, the first full year of the recession, marking the first annual decline in births since the start of the decade and ending an American baby boomlet.

The downturn in the economy best explains the drop in maternity, some experts believe. The Great Depression and subsequent recessions all were accompanied by a decline in births, said Carol Hogue, an Emory University professor of



maternal and child health and epidemiology.

And the numbers have

never rebounded until the economy pulled out of it, she said, calling the 2008 recession

the most likely culprit for fewer babies.

It's not clear that it's the only explanation, however. Another expert noted a recent decline in immigration to the U.S. may also be a factor.

The nation recorded about 4,247,000 births last year, down about 68,000 from 2007, according to a new report from the National Center for Health Statistics.

This recession began in December 2007, and since then the economy has lost almost 7 million jobs. Housing foreclosures worsened in 2007

See Births on A11

UNWRAPPING GOOD HEALTH



PRNewsFoto/Apollo Hospitals

Oscar-winning singer A.R. Rahman helps formally inaugurate the Apollo Children's Hospital in Chennai, India. The hospital, which will provide comprehensive pediatric care to children and adolescents, is staffed with 45 of India's finest pediatric specialists and more than 180 nurses. Last year, Rahman won two Oscars for his music for the film "Slumdog Millionaire."

HEALTH REFORM IS VITAL TO NORTH CAROLINA'S ECONOMY

President Barack Obama, the United States Congress, and most Americans agree: Healthcare reform is long overdue. The current system is unsustainable. Costs continue to rise at an astronomical rate, and millions of citizens are without health insurance.



C.L. Cochran
Guest Columnist

As North Carolina's representatives weigh in on the debate, it's crucial that they recognize the potential impact of their actions back home. In that vein, one extremely important issue is the stance they take on medicines produced from biologic products.

Creating biologic medicines isn't cheap. It typically costs nearly \$1.5 billion to research, develop, and bring a biologic to market. Yet, in North Carolina, there are a multitude of biopharmaceutical research firms that are making the investment with the hope that their research will produce the next blockbuster drug for diseases like cancer or multiple sclerosis.

Because these drugs are so expensive for consumers to purchase, lawmakers are considering a measure that would allow "biosimilars" - or copies of biologics - to be manufactured

See Reform on A8