

# HEALTH & WELLNESS

## Healthbeat

### Study: Racial inequalities very costly to U.S. health system

Racial inequalities in health care access and quality added more than \$50 billion a year in direct U.S. health care costs over a four-year period, according to a study released last week by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington-based think tank.

Researchers at Johns Hopkins and the University of Maryland found that over 30 percent of direct medical expenditures for African Americans, Asian Americans and Hispanics were excess costs linked to health inequalities. Between 2003 and 2006, these excess costs were \$229.4 billion.

Further, the researchers estimated that the indirect costs of racial inequalities associated with illness and premature death amounted to more than a trillion dollars over the same time period. Eliminating these inequalities would have saved the U.S. economy a grand total of \$1.24 trillion dollars. The study noted that this four-year \$1.24 trillion expenditure is more than the annual gross domestic product of India, the world's 12th largest economy.

"This study shows that society has been paying a steep price in actual dollars and cents for racial and ethnic health disparities and unequal access to quality health care," said Ralph B. Everett, President and CEO of the Joint Center. "It also indicates that eliminating these racial inequalities will improve both the health status of our fellow citizens as well as our nation's fiscal health."

### Brenner Hospital fights Shaken Baby Syndrome

Brenner Children's Hospital is partnering with other health agencies throughout the state to provide a Shaken Baby syndrome prevention program to parents and caregivers, called Keeping Babies Safe in North Carolina.

The evidence-based program is a collaboration between the National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, the University of North Carolina Injury Prevention Research Center, and the Center for Child and Family Health.

The goal of Keeping Babies Safe in North Carolina is to reduce Shaken Baby Syndrome in the state by 50 percent over five years, and represents the largest and most comprehensive intervention for Shaken Baby Syndrome in the country.

Recently, nurses and staff at Brenner Children's Hospital Neonatal Intensive and Intermediate Care Nurseries began sharing the program materials and message with parents of all babies before discharge.

Nationally, an estimated 1,200 to 1,400 children a year receive medical treatment after being shaken. An estimated 25 percent of these children die and 80 percent of survivors are left with some form of life-long brain injury.

The program includes hospital and health care provider-based parent education, a 10-minute video and an 11-page booklet that parents can share with other caregivers of their baby, such as family members and babysitters.

### U.S. orders more vaccine

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. health officials have ordered more swine flu vaccine — bringing the nation's eventual total to 251 million doses.

The government on Monday ordered an extra 27.3 million doses from Sanofi Pasteur of France, which produces flu shots at its Swiftwater, Pa., factory. It also ordered 29 million more doses of the nasal-spray version of swine flu vaccine, MedImmune LLC's FluMist.

The news came as health officials announced Monday that while people 10 and older are protected by one dose of swine flu vaccine, children nine and younger almost certainly will need two.

### N.C. gets federal dollars to promote adoption

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has awarded \$1,388,312 to the state of North Carolina to help increase the number of children adopted from foster care. States use the funds from the adoption incentive award to enhance their programs for abused and neglected children.

"Adopting a child from foster care is a wonderful way to enrich any family's life," said HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "We congratulate North Carolina on performing so well this year, and we thank the parents who are providing loving and permanent homes."

The Adoption Incentives program was created as part of the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. It gives states \$4,000 for every foster child adopted, plus a payment of \$8,000 for every foster child age nine and older and \$4,000 for every other special needs child adopted above the respective baselines. In addition, states receive \$1,000 for every foster child adopted over and above the level of the state's highest foster child adoption rate for previous years.

## Dr. Mayo honored for mentorship

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The American Speech Language Hearing Association will honor Dr. Robert Mayo this fall.

Mayo, chair of the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at UNCG, has served as a mentor to more than 200 students of color in the fields of communication sciences and disorders, allied health, medicine, dentistry and the arts. For his longtime commitment of helping students, he will receive the Association's Diversity Champion Awards at its fall convention in New Orleans Nov. 19-21.

Throughout his career, Mayo has inspired students to conduct their own research and guided them during that learning process, which often serves as a springboard to further educational and professional success. More than half of the students he has mentored have presented the results of their research at professional conferences.

In 2004, Mayo developed the Research Mentoring Program, an inter-institutional initiative between UNCG and two historically black colleges and universities with the goal of enhancing opportunities for students of color to gain admission to graduate and professional school.

Last academic year, he encouraged five undergraduates and six graduate students to submit papers for the 2009 National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing convention in Atlanta. All 11 students presented at the convention; two received awards for their scholarship.

Mayo teaches the graduate fluency disorders course and the professional issues and ethics course for the department. His recent research has focused on public perceptions of communication disorders and differences — specifically, stuttering, voice disorders and dialects.

He received his bachelor's degree from George Washington University; his master's from Ohio State University; and his doctorate from Memphis State University (now the University of Memphis). He completed a NIH postdoctoral fellowship in Craniofacial Anomalies at the University of North Carolina Craniofacial Center.



Mayo



The bigger and better Greene Hall.

## FTCC expands health building

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Today, Forsyth Technical Community College is scheduled to open a 20,000 square foot addition to Bob Greene Hall, home of the college's nursing and allied health programs.

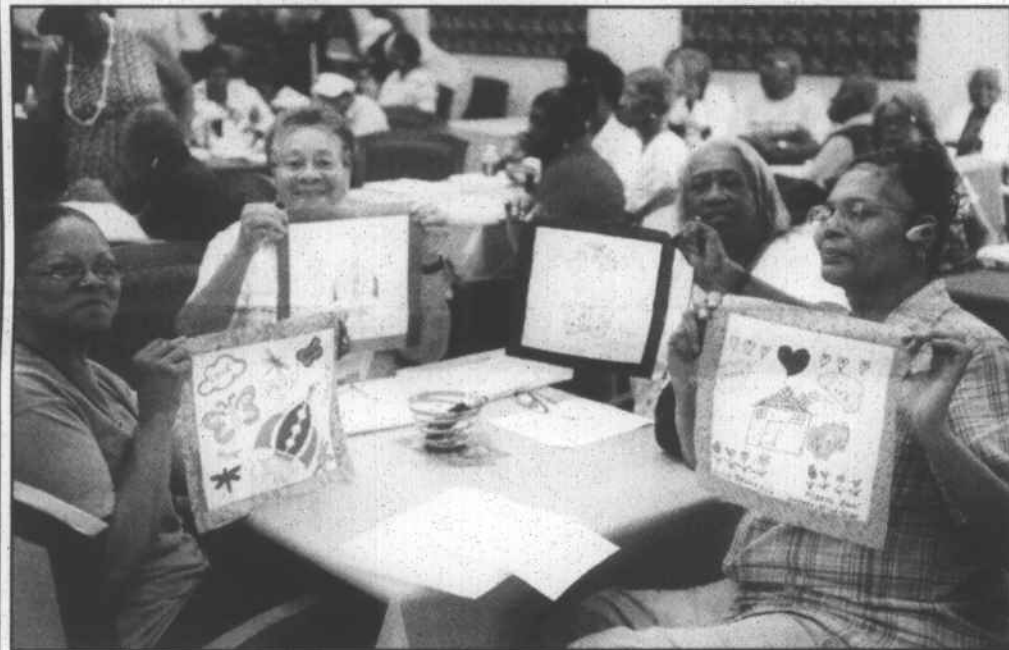
The \$2.3 million addition includes a computer lab, larger classrooms, office space and a catheterization lab for FTCC's Interventional Cardiovascular Technology, the only associate degree program of its kind in the state. The expansion has allowed Forsyth Tech to introduce new programs and increase student enrollment in the highly popular nursing and allied health programs.

Within the renovated building, FTCC will open the Len B. Preslar Jr. School of Allied Health and the Paul M. Wiles School of Nursing. Preslar, the former CEO of N.C. Baptist Hospitals, Inc., and Wiles, the presi-

dent and CEO of Novant Health, have worked over the years to expand and improve FTCC's health programs. The building itself is named for former FTCC president Bob Greene. Since the opening of the first phase of Greene Hall in 1991, N.C. Baptist Hospital and Novant Health have contributed over \$16 million of support to nursing and allied health.

"Paul Wiles and Len Preslar have been visionary leaders in the growth of Winston-Salem's two major medical centers," said Forsyth Tech President Dr. Gary M. Green. "They have also been visionary in their support of the training of the growing number of nurses and allied health professionals our region needs. This state-of-the-art addition would not have come into being without the outstanding support of the Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and Novant Health."

## UNITED THROUGH PAIN



Attendees hold up quilt squares they decorated at the National Pain Foundation's recent education event focusing on shingles and after-shingles. It took place in Denver on Sept. 15, which was Postherpetic Neuralgia (PHN) Awareness Day. PHN, also known as after-shingles pain, is caused by the reactivation of the same virus that causes chickenpox and can affect an individual at anytime without warning. One in every five of the one million Americans that suffer from shingles each year will go on to develop PHN, a devastating condition that disproportionately affects those over the age of 50 or with weakened immune systems.

## Listening and Losing

Fitness podcasts show great promise

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Residents of the Raleigh-Durham area had success in dropping pounds by listening to weight loss podcasts on their MP3 players.

Researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill have published the results of their study, "Pounds Off Digitally (POD) Study: A Randomized Podcasting Weight Loss Intervention," online in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

"Our interest was in using emerging technologies to help busy people maintain their interest in becoming healthier," said Gabrielle M. Turner-McGrievy, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health's nutrition department and the study's lead author.

"The [MP3 player] technology has some advantages over the Internet. It feels more personal when someone is using earphones, as if someone is speaking directly to you. We want to take advantage of that intimacy and tailor messages that will bring success to people looking for ways to reach a healthy weight."

The study involved a 12-week randomized controlled trial of 78 overweight men and women. Participants in a control group listened to 24 episodes of a currently available weight-loss podcast. Another group listened to an enhanced podcast, using tenets of social cognitive theory — including that behavior change is based upon an individual's expectancy (how much they would value an end result) and expectation (whether they believe they will succeed or fail).

The recordings included exercise and nutrition information; a soap opera that discussed weight loss and an audio journal of another person trying to lose weight but whose progress was a week or two ahead of the participant's.

Study participants using the enhanced podcast experienced a significantly greater decrease in both weight and their Body Mass Index (BMI) than the control group. The enhanced group lost 6.4 pounds in 12 weeks, compared to 0.7 pounds in the control group, and dropped one point in BMI, compared to a 0.1 point drop in the control group.

## HOW TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

How easily do you communicate with your physician? Communication is key in any successful relationship, including the relationship between a patient and his or her healthcare provider. A good relationship will result in the best care possible. You'll also feel more confident in your doctor and in the quality of care you're receiving. In this article, we will address some ways to make talking to your doctor more effective.

### Be Prepared

The best way to make the most of your visit is to come to your appointment prepared.

— Write down all the questions you have for the doctor in advance and bring a pen and paper to take notes.

— Bring a list of symptoms if you're not feeling well.

— Bring a list of all the medicines you take. Write down the dosages and how often you take them. Include vitamins, herbal remedies and other supplements in your list.

— Arrive early enough (if possible) to fill out forms.

— Have your insurance card readily available, and bring your medical records or have them sent in advance if you're seeing the doctor for the first time.

— Also, bring your health care advance directive, which outlines instructions about your care if you become unable to speak for yourself. Go over it with your doctor so that your wishes are clear.

When you meet with your physician, be sure to mention:

— Symptoms you are having — the more information you share, the better your doctor will be able to treat you.

— Your health history

— Personal information, including whether you are stressed

— Medicines you are currently taking — including how

