

High drowning rates for blacks, Hispanics worry officials

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

RALEIGH—A trip to the beach or lake is often the focus of a summer day's fun. But it can end tragically as well when swimmers overestimate their skill—and statistics show that some minority groups are at greater risk of drowning.

Experts believe that cultural or economic reasons may put blacks and Hispanics in greater danger when it comes to swimming.

"Black people don't get into the water," said Linda Boose, whose 8-year-old granddaughter, Jasmine, drowned in Falls Lake during Memorial Day weekend. "We were too poor to even think about the water."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 53 Hispanic people accidentally drowned in North Carolina between 1999 and 2003.

At a rate of 2.22 per 100,000 people, that's the second-highest drowning rate for Hispanics in the country in states where more than 20 deaths occurred over the



PHOTO/WADE NASH

A group of blacks board a boat at Lake Norman without the protection of a life jacket. Minorities are less likely to know how to swim.

same period. Only Tennessee's drowning rate for Hispanics was higher.

In the same time frame, 162 black people drowned in North Carolina, a rate of 1.73 per 100,000. Whites, meanwhile, drowned at a rate of 1.02 per 100,000, with 290 accidental drownings in North Carolina—lower than the nationwide rate.

Thornton Draper, the aquatics director at North Carolina Central University, said the higher minority drowning rate has more to do with economics, access and

exposure to swimming than with race.

He said pools are expensive to build and maintain, so poorer schools or neighborhoods may not insist they be built. Swimming lessons can be expensive, and opportunities to practice may be sporadic at outdoor community pools that are only opened seasonally.

Linda Boose, who raised her granddaughter from infancy, said she doesn't swim and Jasmine did not swim very well.

Who skips chemo for breast cancer?

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WASHINGTON—Claudia Lowry had a scary decision. Could she safely skip chemotherapy after surgeons removed her breast cancer?

Tens of thousands of women undergo chemo for breast cancer every year when they don't really need it, but doctors don't have an easy way to tell who can gamble on skipping the harsh drugs.

A simple gene test now promises to help women like Lowry of Kokomo, Ind., make that nerve-wracking choice—and a major government study is enrolling more than 10,000 patients around the country to see just how well it does the job.

"Most of the patients are advised to have chemotherapy. Most of the patients are going to do very well without it," says Dr. Sheila Taube of the National Cancer Institute. "So how can we spare the patients that don't need it?"

Breast cancer is only the opening salvo. Researchers are furiously developing who-to-treat gene tests for colorectal cancer—particularly for early Stage 2 disease that doctors fear is being undertreated—and other malignancies, too.

But if the new breast cancer study pans out, it will mark a big step toward genetically tailored therapy that specialists expect will rapidly replace today's simplistic guidelines for treating early-stage cancer.

More than 100,000 U.S. women a year are diagnosed with early breast cancer that has a remarkably good prognosis. The tumors are small,

haven't spread, and are hormone-sensitive. The vast majority would survive with surgery, radiation and hormone treatment. Yet guidelines today recommend chemotherapy as well for most of those women to catch

the few who need more aggressive help.

In other words, 100 women get chemo, and the risk of harsh, sometimes life-threatening, side effects, to prevent two or three of them from relapsing.

Coffee reduces the risk

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8 percent. The researchers calculated the risk reductions rate for the whole group, not just the drinkers.

Not all heavy drinkers develop cirrhosis, an irreversible scarring of the liver that hurts the organ's ability to filter toxins from the blood. Klatsky said the new findings may help explain why some people's livers survive heavy alcohol use.

Hepatitis C and some inherited diseases can also cause cirrhosis. But the study found coffee did not protect the liver against those other causes of scarring.



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How to Accomplish More

In this day and time, it seems like there is just so much that we all have to do. It seems that from the moment we awake we are running from one thing to the next. There is of course getting ready for work. If you have family, this may involve getting children ready for school or day care. Once work is over, it is rushing to pick up children from day care. For some, it may be going to some activity after work. Then once you get home, somehow, dinner has to be prepared. The next day the same cycle starts over again.

Technology promised us that it would liberate us from having so much to do. We have computers now and other technologies that were supposed to save us time. Instead, it seems that we have even more to do. There are various ways proposed to help us accomplish more in what seems to be a never-ending list of demands on our time.

I remember at one time that I was looking for a way to get more out of my day. I decided to take a time management course. Actually, I have done that on several occasions. One program recommended being able to accomplish more by getting up at 5 in the morning and getting to the office at 7 a.m. and working there until the regular stopping time. That seemed to

be a rather self-defeating approach to me. My objective was not to fill up more of my day with even more.

I have discovered that one way to get more done is actually to slow down. I have come to realize that when I pace myself, I am actually able to do more. This relaxes me and allows me to concentrate and focus on what I have to do. By slowing down, I am actually able to move through my projects more efficiently. By slowing down, I am actually able to remember more of what I need to do and what I have to get done. This also gives me a great sense of accomplishment.

I would suggest that if you want to get more done in your life do not try to cram even more into it. Instead, take the time to determine what you really need to do. Allow yourself the time to do it well. Then congratulate yourself on what you have done and move on to the next project.

You will be amazed at how much you can accomplish just by slowing down. The greatest benefit is that you will now have the time to enjoy life even more!

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