

Dispelling lung cancer myths with some facts

By Carol Harriston
SPECIAL TO THE POST

Lung cancer kills more women than breast cancer. It's deadlier for men than prostate cancer. In fact, lung cancer claims more lives a year than breast, prostate, colon, liver and skin cancers combined - 30 percent of cancer deaths.

The disease strikes black men 50 percent more often than white men, 60 percent more often than non-white Hispanic men. Black women are diagnosed with lung cancer less than white women. For every 10 people in the United States with the disease, about six of them die within a year of the diagnosis. Seven of those 10 will die within two years.

For both black men and women, the diagnosis is sobering. Develop lung cancer, and you're more likely to die from it than any other racial group.

November is Lung Cancer Awareness month, no better time to learn facts and to dispel myths about this deadly disease.

First, a few facts.

About 175,000 new cases of lung cancer will be discovered this year. By Dec. 31, 162,000 people who were diagnosed with lung cancer before 2006 will die. Current and former smokers account for a vast majority of lung cancer cases, but up to 15 percent of those who get the disease never smoked.

Lung cancer patients who are black are less likely than whites to have surgical treatment, a statistic that contributes to the higher death rate for blacks with the disease.

Once diagnosed with lung cancer, the patient has a 15 percent chance to live at least five years. Need some perspective? With prostate cancer, it's 99.9 percent; breast cancer, 89 percent; colon cancer, 65 percent.

Now, some myths cited in the book "Lung Cancer, Myths, Facts, Choices and Hope" by Claudia Henschke, MD, Peggy McCarthy with Sarah Wernick.

If you smoke, the damage to your lungs is done, so there's no reason to quit. Research shows that quitting use of tobacco products can help to heal damage that leads to cancer and can improve response to treatment for those with the disease.

Women need not worry about lung cancer, it's a "man thing." The American Cancer Society estimates that 82,000 women will get lung cancer this year. The disease will kill 72,000 women who had the disease before 2006.

Coughing up blood is a first sign of lung cancer. It is a symptom, but usually appears after the disease is established.

Getting a diagnosis of lung cancer is like getting a death sentence, and patients often hear that nothing can be done. Without treatment, lung cancer is usually fatal. But proper treatment, especially in early stages of the disease, can extend life. Half of people with an early diagnosis of lung cancer are alive five years, for example, if surgery is performed.

Tobacco smoke contains at least 55 carcinogens. Smoking marijuana, which contains more tar than cigarettes is thought to cause lung cancer.

Other cancer-causing agents or risk factors have been linked to the development of lung cancer. They include radon, asbestos, air pollution, radiation, a deficiency or excess of Vitamin A and, most notably, secondhand smoke. Also, living in an area such as Washington, D.C., with bad air pollution can contribute to developing lung cancer.

Dr. Henschke has developed a procedure using spiral CT scans that can detect early lung cancer. This x-ray procedure provides cross sectional and, if needed,

three-dimensional images of internal organs and structures of the body. The spiral CT scan may discover lung cancer before a patient displays symptoms, offering patients greater chances of long-term survival and cure.

Symptoms of lung cancer are common with other diseases and easy to ignore. They include fatigue, shortness of breath, wheezing, pains in the shoulder, back or arms, chronic bronchitis or pneumonia, weight loss and loss of appetite.

If you have a history of lung cancer in your family or think you may be at risk for developing the disease talk to your doctor.

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Common sense will ultimately lead to common cents

Some people say "common sense is not common," which may be the main reason black people are not as far up the economic ladder as we should be.

Having been in this country since it started, having provided the free labor that led to the creation of much of the wealth now enjoyed by those in charge, and having established a history of self-help and entrepreneurial initiative since our enslavement, black people have the strongest case and the greatest need to exercise a little common sense when it comes to working collectively to improve our current position in the U.S.



JAMES CLINGMAN

If we use our common sense, we will definitely have common cents. Common sense suggests that we do as other groups are doing, and as our ancestors did in this country: pool our resources and support one another.

Common sense tells us to look around and see the dire straits our children are facing in this country and start compiling some common cents to help them meet and overcome their current and future economic challenges.

Common sense teaches us that we must not do anything that will subject us to the misery of incarceration and the profiteering of this nation's prison industrial complex, we must institute a national Boycott Prisons campaign and work to give our youth alternatives, especially economic alternatives, to their negative behaviors.

Common sense should have taught us that banks and other financial institutions still discriminate against us, and by using our common cents we can overcome much of that discrimination by collectively leveraging our resources and creating and maintaining our own financial institutions. (Before anyone gets scared or asks why we need black owned banks and credit unions, think about the Korean banks, the Cuban banks, the Polish banks, the Chinese banks, and all the others that exist in this country.)

Common sense dictates that we utilize our common cents to fund our own initiatives, first, and then look to others to support them - support them, not control them. Having common cents would also increase our ability to defend ourselves against local political issues that are not in our best interests, our common cents can be used to fund ballot initiatives, finance the campaigns of candidates who will work on our behalf, and pay for research, analyses, and recommendations that can be used to make informed voting decisions.

Common sense instructs us to pursue our self-interest in a society that is rapidly becoming more polarized. Common sense tells us that black people do not control the major political and economic games, but to assure our participation in the game and our being in a position to win every now and then we must use our common cents. Economics runs this country; common sense should tell us that.

If we use our common sense we will also use our common cents to create and sustain an economic foundation from which to operate and on which to build even more common cents initiatives. We must use our common sense the way our ancestors did, as they quickly caught on to the system they faced and immediately went to work building their economic resources to purchase their freedom and that of their relatives and friends. Freedom still ain't free, ya'll.

As we look back on our progress for the past 45 years, common sense shows us how far we have come relative to the strategies we chose to pursue and the leadership we decided to follow. Common sense says several of our leaders have done marvelously well, but as a whole Black people are still stuck at the bottom of the economic ladder, a ladder with rungs that begin at the halfway point. It is up to us to figure out how to get to the halfway point, common sense suggests we must build add own rungs to that economic ladder.

Utilizing our common sense would lead us to the accumulation of common cents and we would be well on our way to developing the resources we need to survive and thrive in this nation. Currently we are too individualistic in our thinking and our actions to create common cents strategies. We must change our minds, raise our level of consciousness, and put positive action behind our rhetoric.

We must be willing to use our individual God-given gifts, to contribute to the uplift of a people who have suffered more horrendous treatment, both physical and psychological, than any people in this country. Common sense tells us that. How else are we going to prosper? How else will we achieve economic empowerment? How else will we ever be able to positively impact the futures of our children?

Many of us have heard that common sense is not common. If that is true, then I guess I can understand the paucity or lack of common cents initiatives among black people. But I don't believe black people are short on common sense.

Our great-grandparents could not have done all they did without possessing a tremendous amount of common sense that, in turn, directed them to accumulate a great deal of common cents with which to take care of their business? What's up with us?

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What will MLK Memorial really mean to America?

As I approached the site of the memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King on the Mall in Washington, D.C. to attend the event celebrating the beginning construction, I was impressed at its juxtaposition between Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Jefferson.

This was a fitting place because King was one of the "founding fathers" of this nation every bit as much as those who began the democratic experiment in 1787. In effect, men like Lincoln and Jefferson would begin the experiment, but it would take Frederick Douglass and Dr. King, along with Cesar Chavez, Russell Means, and others to fulfill it by expanding the notions of democracy, equality and freedom, through their leadership of movements which demanded that they apply to all Americans.



RON WALTERS

As I sat there listening to the speakers on the platform I looked at those arrayed on the stage and became aware that they represented a grand contradiction, reflective of the position of Black people in America today. Again, as at the funeral of Coretta Scott King, the presence and voices of officialdom in the person of presidents of the United States and dignitaries - most of whom were unassociated with the movement, were accorded priority. But the presence and voices of those who worked with King closest (except for Andy Young and Rev. Jesse Jackson) and for whom he suffered most were largely missing. They included Dorothy Cotton, James Orange - Rev. Joe Lowery would surely not be invited - Rev. C. T. Vivian, someone from Ralph Abernathy's family and others.

That scene on the stage was as contradictory and as ironic as the image of Malcolm X on a postage stamp, but it is perhaps inevitable as the best of our community ascend to the realm of national respect. With that ascension, however, there is the question of what the memorial would represent.

Would it be the way which the nation pays respect to the man who led a movement for social change, challenging politicians with "lips dripping with interposition and nullification" to a vision of the Constitution that held out the hope of resourceful citizenship? Or, will it be merely a monument to a slain dreamer who pined for the eventual freedom of his people? Will it become a constant reminder of a man and people who waged a bloody battle for freedom and through him, challenged to the nation "to live out the true meaning of its creed," or distort his life as one of an eloquent preacher.

The action that resolves the contradiction is to be perpetually engaged in the struggle for authenticity, to infuse the memorial with the meaning of the movement which King gave his life, by continuing in this age to raise the troubling questions about fulfilling the meaning of the American Constitution, to challenge the direction of America when it privileges racism, war and poverty by its callous inaction or misdirected decision. In this way we continue to try "to bend the moral arc of the universe toward justice."

This means addressing the current problems of the uses to which power will be put. We live in an era where real human problems are not resolved by the power of reason and the use of the massive material and spiritual resources of the nation. Rather, there has arisen a paradigm that mobilizes military might, money and radical Christian evangelism, through an ideology that conserves resources for the few and excludes the many by its control of public policy. A memorial to Dr. King and his movement would call that philosophy, its direction and its result into question.

This finally raises another question about framing the King Memorial in an authentic way. By giving officialdom its due, but by having another event that invokes the blessings of Africa, invites the presence and voices of his staff and his colleagues in the breadth of the civil rights movement and mingles them with locked-out peoples of all races.

That is my vision of how a Memorial to Dr. King and the hundreds of thousands of those whose marching feet caused Jefferson and Lincoln to look our way should finally achieve its authenticity. And it will not be so until it is suffused with that history and that spirit.

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Will Prince Georges County, Md., become another Compton?

Will Prince Georges County, Md. Become another Compton?

By Harry C. Alford
NNPA Columnist

"BEYOND THE RHETORIC"

There is certainly a correlation between race and economics when it comes to communities within the United States. A moderate working-class White community will change into an upper middle class Black community. It will be prestigious for a while and then it will be targeted by bad policy and over the

years erosion starts to sit in and then crime invades its core. The crime gets so bad that property values start declining and the quality of life becomes pitiful. In a few decades you have what is known as a "golden ghetto". The final act is drug infestation. Why does this happen?

As my relatives emigrated from Louisiana to Los Angeles in the 40s and 50s, I saw communities make the above transition. There was "Lovely Compton." Two of my cousins integrated Fremont High. Another cousin helped integrate Washington High. My Aunt Mary and her clan integrated Inglewood. Aunt Lula and her clan bought a house at Hoover and Florence

across the street from a synagogue. Decades later the Rodney King Riot would erupt three blocks down the street. These once fashionable places are now just dots on a map of an urban area made infamous in the great film "Boys in the Hood."

When I was discharged from the Army in 1974, Procter & Gamble assigned me to Detroit. Beautiful neighborhoods like Rosedale Park and Palmer Woods were heading south with a bullet - a whole lot of bullets. It hit bottom with the eruptions of the inevitable drug wars.

The most prestigious Black county in the United States today is the D.C. suburb of Prince Georges County,

Maryland. It has the highest black family income in the nation, which makes it a target for bad policy to be followed by crime and drug infestation. Keep in mind this is the same place where pro-segregationist and presidential hopeful George Wallace was shot while addressing his base. His base, White and very anti-Black, was set on preventing any race mixing and integration. The Fair Housing Act and affirmative action for high paying federal jobs changed all of that.

Recently, I read a few studies that showed the General Services Administration (landlord for federal offices) had a systematic way of

redlining Prince Georges County from any regional development. Its affect after decades was starting to take its toll. The majority of workers had to travel out of the county. Thirty-five percent of all Beltway travelers are commuters from Prince Georges County. A county that is overly residential and lacking in business vitality - retail, industrial and office space.

I told two Congressional officials based in the county that I feared a downward transition like Inglewood or Compton was starting to set in. They both assured me that nothing of its kind would happen in Prince Georges County.

So let's take a quick look

My two sons go to the University of Maryland, which is in Prince Georges County. UMD consistently has one of the highest crimes rates among U.S. colleges. Last semester, a fellow athlete of theirs answered his dorm door. A hit man pushed his way in and put a gun to his head and said "You didn't deliver the stash and now you have to go." It took him 10 long minutes to convince the assassin that it was his roommate or someone else he was after. He moved out of the dorm but was never the same. He is leaving at the end of this semester.

Two blocks down the street from my boys, a home was recently invaded by robbers.