
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 18, 2009

NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund honors Stroke Awareness Month by launching new stroke prevention campaign

(RALEIGH, NC) – The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund (HWTF) launched a new media campaign today to coincide with the national health observance of May as Stroke Awareness Month. The campaign is the latest in a series of ads designed as part of HWTF's \$22 million Eliminating Health Disparities Initiative (HDI), a statewide effort which began in 2006.

The initiative includes grant awards to community-based projects that focus on reducing health disparities related to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer among African-Americans, Latinos/Hispanics and American Indians across the state. Through HDI, HWTF also leads efforts to increase cultural competency among health care providers.

While North Carolina's stroke death rate is on the decline, it remains the 6th highest in the nation, and stroke is the 3rd leading cause of death in our state. African-Americans in our state have significantly higher stroke death rates than do whites, and they are more likely to die of stroke at younger ages than their white counterparts. Among African-American men, 35% of stroke deaths occur before age 65, compared with 15% among white men; 20% of stroke deaths among African-American women occur before age 65, compared with 7% among white women.

"The Health and Wellness Trust Fund is committed to eliminating health disparities and making North Carolina the healthiest state in the nation," said Vandana Shah, Executive Director of HWTF. "We want to better educate all citizens about the risk of stroke and the critical need to manage their blood pressure, since high blood pressure is the number one risk factor for stroke."

The campaign targets African-Americans because of the disparate rates of morbidity and mortality as a result of stroke. It debuts with two television ads featuring Gladys Lundy, resident of Wake County and President of the Minority Women's Health Project. Lundy was only 45 years old when she had a debilitating stroke and spent many years in recovery. In the ads, she speaks honestly and compellingly about her experience.

"I was young. I never associated stroke with anyone my age," said Lundy.

The ad underscores the importance of keeping blood pressure below 120/80 as a means of stroke prevention and encourages viewers to access the HWTF health disparities Web site (www.CaretoActNC.com) to learn more about high blood pressure, stroke prevention and the warning signs of a stroke.

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STROKE AWARENESS MONTH/PAGE 2

HWTF is also funding toll-free phone services through the CARE-LINE (1-800-662-7030) for those who may lack internet access. The CARE-LINE operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

ABOUT THE NC HEALTH AND WELLNESS TRUST FUND

The NC Health and Wellness Trust Fund makes North Carolina stronger, both physically and economically, by funding programs that promote preventive health. Created by the General Assembly in 2000 to allocate a portion of North Carolina's share of the national tobacco settlement, HWTF has invested \$199 million to support preventive health initiatives and \$102 million to fund prescription drug assistance programs. For more information, please visit www.HealthWellNC.com.

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