Disbelief Diminishes African American Adult Vaccination Rates

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Washington, D.C. - New data shows that African Americans fail to keep up with vaccinations into adulthood, making them more vulnerable to diseases. While African American adults place high priorities on immunizations for their children, they fail to protect themselves with disease preventable vaccines. It is hoped that more effective information campaigns for adults about the devastation of preventable diseases and the safety of vaccines into adulthood will result in high rates of vaccination throughout life for all adults, particularly among young adults.

According to the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases, the childhood immunization program has been largely successful in controlling vaccine-preventable diseases in the U.S. The same widespread success has not been achieved with adult vaccinations. Adult vaccination rates are low, with those in the African American community being even lower. Some ask the question why African Americans fail to protect their health in terms of preventing diseases and illness when there are vaccinations out there that can smooth the road to a healthy life. There are a number of reasons with the African American population distrust of the vaccines and the healthcare system prominent at the top of the list. Most doubt the vaccine's effectiveness and believe that it will not help them to fight off the infection, but will only make them ill from the injection.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that immunizations rates for older African Americans are substantially lower for the general older adult population. Researchers are examining factors including patients negative attitudes, misconceptions about vaccines, shortages of effective programs for vaccine delivery, that effect the likelihood of African Americans to acquire vaccinations.

Other factors that weigh in on the African American community are the accessibility to locations that provide vaccinations. Many areas where African Americans make up the majority of the population are poverty stricken. There are few resources in this area to provide the necessary health care provisions for a health care education. Information points to diminishing African American health indicators when vaccine information is not provided effectively by vaccine providers. Health care providers play a major role in recommending vaccines to their patients. The emerging challenge is how to effectively overcome issues of fear to guide more African Americans on the right track to maintaining vaccines.

The lack of vaccine protection results in deaths and thousands more hospitalized. It is up to the African American community to play a critical role in educating themselves about the importance of adult vaccination. Viruses and bacteria that cause illness and death are still alive and can be passed on to people who are not protected by vaccines. African American adults must realize that in order to provide their family and have a healthy prolonged life, vaccinations and health are critical.

For more information on vaccines and vaccine-preventable diseases, please visit www.nfid.org.

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