

UPDATES FROM US HEALTH AGENCIES

Recent activity in government and non-government agencies may affect readers of *Ethnicity & Disease* and other healthcare professionals working with ethnic minority and under-served populations. Below are some current items of interest.

FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)

Study Finds Community Physical Activity Programs Are Money Well Spent

Community-based physical activity interventions designed to promote more active lifestyles among adults are cost-effective in reducing heart disease, stroke, colorectal and breast cancers, and type 2 diabetes, according to a study by CDC, with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Using a rigorous economic model developed to assess the cost-effectiveness of community-based physical activity interventions, the study found these interventions to be cost-effective, reducing new cases of many chronic diseases and improving quality of life. Researchers found that community-based physical activity programs appeared to

reduce new cases of disease by 5–15 cases per 100,000 people for colon cancer, 15–58 cases per 100,000 for breast cancer, 59–207 cases per 100,000 for type 2 diabetes, and 140–476 cases per 100,000 for heart disease.

Community-based physical activity interventions broadly fall under the following strategies:

- Community campaigns such as mass communication efforts (television/radio, newspapers, billboards, advertisements).
- Social support networks such as exercise groups to encourage behavior change.
- Tailored behavior change to encourage people to set phys-

ical activity goals and monitor their individual progress.

- Enhanced access to services that support active lifestyles such as fitness centers, bike paths, and walking trails.

“Our study found that public health strategies that promote physical activity are cost-effective, and compared with other well-accepted prevention strategies, such as treatment for high cholesterol or motor vehicle air bags, offer good value for the money spent,” said Larissa Roux, MD, PhD, lead author of the study.

“This study supports the value and effectiveness of the physical activity interventions that were studied,” said William Dietz, MD, PhD, director of

CDC’s Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity. “This study also shows the importance of the new physical activity guidelines put forth last month by the US Department of Health and Human Services.” The HHS guidelines recommend:

- 2.5 hours each week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, or 1.25 hours each week of vigorous-intensity aerobic activity, such as jogging or running.
- In addition, all adults should include muscle-strengthening activities that work all the major muscle groups on two or more days per week.

FROM THE NATIONAL HEART, LUNG, AND BLOOD INSTITUTE (NHLBI)

New Survey Suggests Growing Awareness of COPD, Nation’s Fourth Leading Killer

Awareness of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is growing, but few Americans have a thorough understanding of the disease, according to a new national

survey. The new data show that 64% of survey respondents had heard of COPD, compared with 49% in a 2004 survey. Among those who reported hearing of COPD, only half recognized

the disease as a leading cause of death, and just 44% understood it to be treatable. NHLBI analyzed results from the annual HealthStyles survey of American public health attitudes, knowledge, practices, and lifestyle habits, conducted each summer by Porter Novelli.

The fourth leading cause of death in the United States, COPD is a serious lung disease affecting an estimated 24 million Americans. More than 12 million people are currently diagnosed with COPD, and another 12 million may have COPD but remain undiagnosed despite

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recognizable symptoms. COPD typically affects people aged ≥ 45 years, especially those who smoke or have smoked, and those with risk factors associated with genetics or environmental exposures. Symptoms include chronic cough, sometimes called “smoker’s cough,” shortness of breath, wheezing, not being able to take a deep breath, and excess sputum production.

While 74% of survey respondents correctly identified shortness of breath as a symptom of COPD, only 5% recognized chronic cough as a symptom of the disease. Smoking is attributed to as many as 9 out of 10 COPD-related deaths, but 66% of survey respondents did not recognize smoking as a risk factor. This was especially true among the smokers surveyed,

only 22% of whom recognized that their smoking puts them at greater risk for COPD.

“This is perhaps the most distressing information that the survey has brought to light,” said James P. Kiley, PhD, director of the NHLBI Division of Lung Diseases. “While we applaud the millions of Americans who have heeded the public health community’s call to quit smoking,

it’s important that both current and former smokers know that they remain at risk for COPD.”

For those diagnosed with COPD, many treatments are available to reduce symptoms, improve breathing, and help patients get back to doing activities they used to do.

FROM THE CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION (CDC)

Slight Decrease in Smoking Rates Was Seen From 2006 to 2007

An estimated 19.8% of US adults (43.4 million people) were current smokers in 2007, down from 20.8% in 2006, according to a CDC study. However, based on the current rate of decline, the national health objective of reducing the prevalence of adult cigarette

smoking to $\leq 12\%$ is unlikely to be met by 2010.

Smoking causes $\geq 30\%$ of all cancer deaths, including $>80\%$ of lung cancer deaths and 80% of deaths from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Smoking is responsible for early cardiovascular disease and death. As a result,

approximately half of all long-term smokers, particularly those who began smoking as teens, die prematurely, many in middle age.

“The good news, we continue to see fewer people smoking,” said Janet Collins, PhD, director of CDC’s National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. “The bad news is we need more people to quit. Quitting smoking is the

most important step smokers can take to improve their health and protect the health of non-smoking family members. Smokers should be aware that there are treatments and services available to help them quit now more than ever before. Smokers can more than double their likelihood of successfully quitting by using medications and telephone counseling.”