

19 predominantly African-American churches hold blood pressure-screening contest

Patti Singer • Staff writer • January 14, 2011

Members of 19 churches with predominantly African-American congregations are participating in a blood-pressure screening contest through March.

“God wants us to be whole, spiritually, financially, emotionally and physically,” said the Rev. James L. Cherry Jr., pastor at Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, whose congregation will be participating.

Cherry said that looking after physical health is part of the church’s ministry.

High blood pressure results in serious health problems among African-Americans

According to the American Heart Association, in 2006 the death rates per 100,000 population from high blood pressure 51.1 for black males and 37.7 for black females, while the rates were 15.6 for white males and 14.3 for white females.

According to the National Kidney Foundation, high blood pressure is the second leading cause of kidney failure among African Americans, accounting for 34 percent of the new cases each year. However, high blood pressure remains the leading cause of death overall in African Americans because of its link with heart attacks and strokes.

More than 40 percent of African Americans are believed to have high blood pressure. African-Americans also have higher death rates from causes related to high blood pressure.

Many African Americans may not know about the connection between high blood pressure and chronic kidney disease.

The contest is part of a church-based program to improve care of people with high blood pressure.

The initiative is sponsored by the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency-Rochester Business Alliance High Blood Pressure Collaborative, in partnership with the Rochester Health Engagement Project. MVP Health Care and the National Kidney Foundation Serving Upstate New York also are involved.

The church with the highest percentage of participation, based on the number of people at the start of the program, will win \$1,000.
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