

Sharon Allison-Otley, M.D.

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For African American seniors who want to maintain their health and improve their quality of life, Dr. Sharon Allison-Otley has one motto to share: *If you don't move it, you will lose it.*

"During my geriatric fellowship, I had a patient who was 101 years old and still walked two to three miles a day," said Allison-Otley. "We need to continue to change our views on elderly care to reflect the active lifestyles of today's seniors."

Seniors need a holistic approach to care, according to Allison-Otley. "It's important that African American seniors have access to the information and tools they need to live healthful lifestyles; along with medical care, medicine and programs for their wellness," she said.

Through the COS HAR Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps individuals understand and access health information and improve their health literacy, Allison-Otley focuses her efforts on teaching about preventive care and early disease detection in geriatric populations. "It's all about arming yourself with the best possible information and opening dialogues with health care providers," she explained.

To prevent disease and prolong health, Allison-Otley believes it is important that seniors get proper nutrition – fiber, fruits, vegetables and a low-fat diet – and exercise regularly. Other preventative measures include drinking in moderation, and getting flu, pneumonia and other vaccines. Seniors also need to have a strong support system.

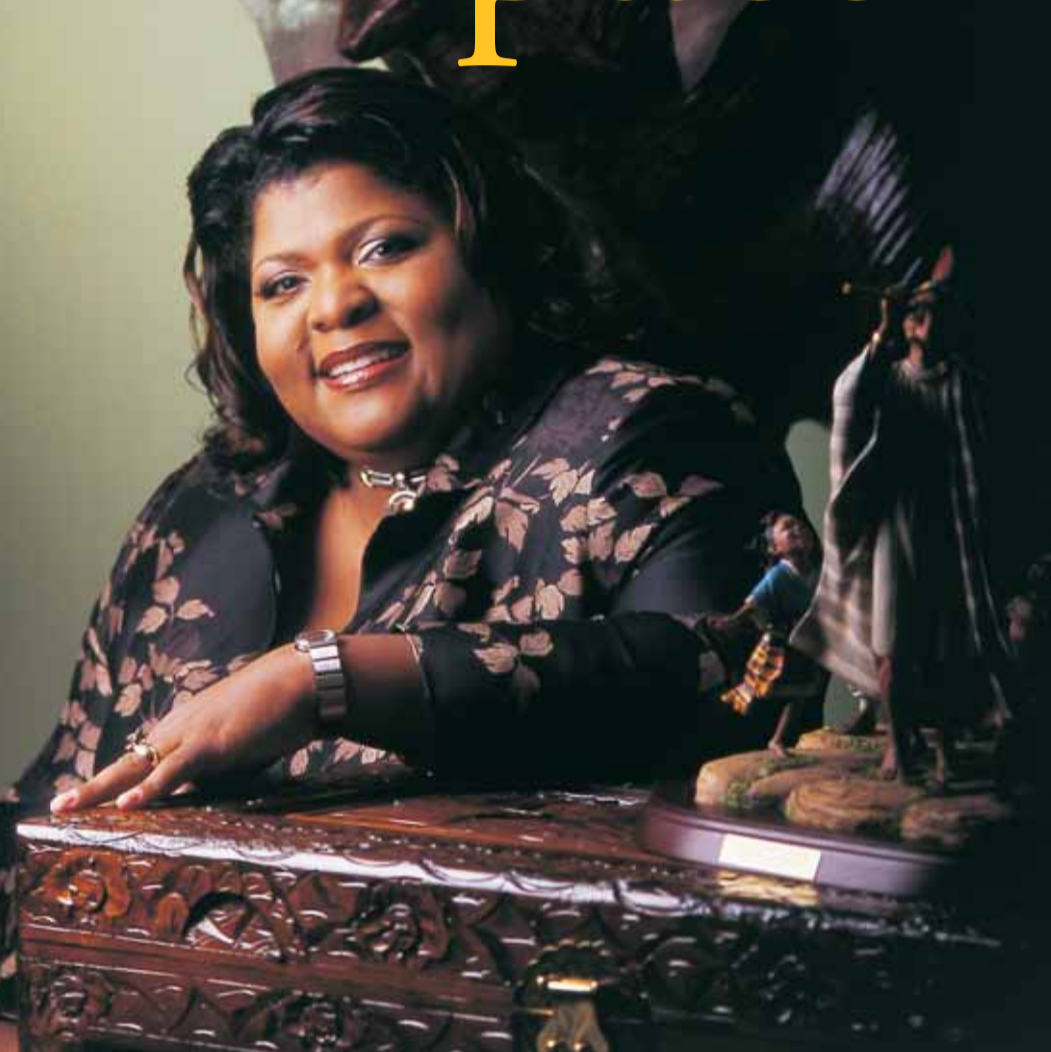
"Seniors need to designate a family member or primary caregiver. They should identify a health care power of attorney and have a living will – something that can speak for them when they can't speak for themselves," she said.

Although the Alzheimer's Association estimates that Alzheimer's disease is anywhere from 14 percent to 100 percent more prevalent among African Americans than among whites, Allison-Otley dismisses the belief that seniors automatically will develop dementia or Alzheimer's disease. "It's important that seniors recognize their own cognitive changes and are open to them. They should seek early diagnosis, because it will make a difference in their quality of life and their ability to navigate the health care system."

Allison-Otley's goal is to empower African American seniors and help them understand their health care options. "With geriatric populations, family members – and the patients themselves – often don't know all the benefits they're entitled to. Through the COS HAR Foundation's health outreach and education initiatives, I am able to impact the lives of families and generations by helping them decipher the language of health."

Allison-Otley, who recently completed her first novel, *All I Ever Did Was Love a Man*, believes life doesn't end until the last breath is taken, and up to that point we all want life to be fulfilling. "Seniors are an integral part of our society, and if we listen to them, we can avoid many of life's pitfalls."

Impact



Senior Health

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FACT

People age 65 and older consume more prescription and over-the-counter medicines than any other age group.

November 2006

STAGE OF LIFE – Senior

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 1945: John H. Johnson publishes first issue of <i>Ebony</i> .	2 1954: Charles C. Diggs elected Michigan's first black congressman. 1983: President Ronald Reagan designates Martin Luther King Jr. Day a national holiday.	3 1981: Thirman L. Milner elected mayor of Hartford, Connecticut, becoming first African American mayor in New England.	4 1879: Thomas Elkins patents refrigeration apparatus. 1992: Carol Moseley Braun becomes first African American woman elected to the U.S. Senate.
5 1968: Shirley Chisholm of Brooklyn, New York, becomes first black woman elected to Congress.	6 1900: James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson compose "Lift Every Voice and Sing."	7 Election Day 1989: L. Douglas Wilder elected governor of Virginia, becoming nation's first African American governor since Reconstruction.	8 1938: Crystal Bird Fauset elected state representative in Pennsylvania, becoming first black woman to serve in a state legislature.	9 1731: Mathematician, urban planner and inventor Benjamin Banneker born.	10 1983: Wilson Goode elected Philadelphia's first African American mayor.	11 Veterans' Day 1989: Civil Rights Memorial dedicated in Montgomery, Alabama.
12 1941: Mary Cardwell Dawson and Madame Lillian Evanti establish the National Negro Opera Company.	13 1940: The U.S. Supreme Court rules in <i>Hansberry vs. Lee</i> that blacks cannot be barred from white neighborhoods.	14 1915: Booker T. Washington, educator and writer, dies.	15 1881: Payton Johnson patents swinging chair.	16 1981: Pam Johnson named publisher of the <i>Ithaca Journal</i> in New York, becoming first African American woman to head a daily newspaper.	17 1980: Howard University airs WHHM, first African American-operated public radio station.	18 1797: Sojourner Truth, abolitionist and Civil War nurse, born.
19 1953: Roy Campanella named Most Valuable Player in National Baseball League for the second time.	20 1865: Howard Seminary (later Howard University) founded in Washington, D.C. 1923: Garrett A. Morgan patents traffic light signal.	21 1893: Granville T. Woods patents electric railway conduit.	22 1930: Elijah Muhammed establishes the Nation of Islam.	23 Thanksgiving Day 1897: A.J. Beard patents the Jenny Coupler, still used to connect railroad cars. 1897: John L. Love patents pencil sharpener.	24 1868: Pianist Scott Joplin, the "Father of Ragtime," born.	25 1955: The Interstate Commerce Commission bans segregation in interstate travel.
26 1883: Sojourner Truth, abolitionist and Civil War nurse, dies. 1970: Charles Gordone becomes first African American playwright to receive the Pulitzer Prize (for <i>No Place to Be Somebody</i>).	27 1990: Charles Johnson awarded National Book Award for fiction for <i>Middle Passage</i> .	28 1960: Richard Wright, novelist and author of <i>Native Son</i> , dies. 1961: Ernie Davis becomes first black to win the Heisman Trophy.	29 1908: Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall born. 1908: Adam Clayton Powell Jr., politician and civil rights activist, born.	30 1897: J.A. Sweeting patents cigarette-rolling device. 1912: Gordon Parks, writer, filmmaker and photographer, born.		



Don't wait until you feel thirsty to start drinking. With age you may lose some of your sense of thirst.

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