



In the Community

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— Dr. Luvenia W. Cowart

The neighborhood barbershop. It's a place for men to gather, get a trim, have a close shave ... and learn about prostate cancer?

“For many men, health is not a main concern. They don't seek out health information. That's why the barbershop is a great place to teach minority men about important health issues. It's a place where they feel comfortable,” says Dr. Luvenia W. Cowart, director of the Barbershop Education Program for Prostate Cancer.

The program is conducted on Saturdays in six barbershops in the Syracuse, New York, area.

While waiting for haircuts or shaves, men learn about prostate cancer risks and check-ups that can help them. There are videos, brochures, posters, one-to-one conversations and more.

“We use materials that are culturally relevant and appealing to African American men,” says Cowart. “We think about everything — colors, photos, music, words. Every phrase is important. Every picture is purposeful.”

Most important, Cowart and partner, Betty Brown, retired oncology nurse, talk to the men in a friendly, nonjudgmental way.

“We want to help men improve their health literacy and take responsibility for their health care,” she says.

Cowart led the team that created the program in 1999 through the Prostate Cancer Education Council of Central New York. It is in partnership with Syracuse University, where she also teaches health literacy and culturally competent health care.

Cowart was concerned when she found out African American men have the world's highest rate of prostate cancer. She recognized a new way was needed to tell African American men about the dangers of the disease.

“When men go to the doctor, they don't ask questions,” Cowart says. “We teach them to talk about their health and ask the right questions.”

The program focuses on prostate cancer awareness, but it also provides general health information. They talk about family history, diet, exercise and the importance of a healthful lifestyle. They tell men to get tested early.

“Many men are afraid to go to the doctor. They would rather not know if they are sick. Or they think going to the doctor makes them sick,” Cowart says. “We have to change their minds. We tell them they need to go to the doctor before they get sick or have symptoms.”

Cowart says most of the men have been excited about the program. The results have been great.

“I walk down the street, and men stop me to tell me they got their screenings,” she says. “I might not even know their names. But I know that I helped them take control of their health.”

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Labor Day 1993: Condoleezza Rice named provost at Stanford University, becoming the youngest person and first black to hold this position.	2 1958: Frederick M. Jones patents control device for internal combustion engine.	3 1979: Robert Maynard becomes first African American to head a major daily newspaper, <i>Oakland Tribune</i> in California.	4 1957: Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus calls out the National Guard to bar black students from entering a Little Rock high school.	5 1960: Leopold Sedar Senghor, poet and politician, elected president of Senegal.	6 1848: Frederick Douglass elected president of National Black Political Convention in Cleveland, Ohio.
7 1954: Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, Maryland, public schools integrated.	8 1981: Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, dies. 2001: Venus Williams defeats sister Serena Williams in women's finals at U.S. Open.	9 1968: Arthur Ashe Jr. wins men's singles tennis championship at U.S. Open. 2000: Venus Williams wins women's singles tennis championship at U.S. Open.	10 1855: John Mercer Langston elected township clerk of Brownhelm, Ohio, becoming first black to hold elective office in the U.S.	11 1959: Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington wins Spingarn Medal for his achievements in music. 1999: Serena Williams wins women's singles tennis championship at U.S. Open.	12 1913: Track and field star Jesse Owens born. 1992: Dr. Mae C. Jemison becomes first African American woman to travel in space.	13 1886: Literary critic Alain Locke, first black Rhodes scholar, born.
14 1921: Constance Baker Motley, first black woman appointed federal judge, born.	15 1963: Four black girls killed in Birmingham, Alabama, church bombing.	16 1923: First Catholic seminary for black priests dedicated in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.	17 1983: Vanessa Williams becomes first African American crowned Miss America.	18 1895: Booker T. Washington delivers famous Atlanta Exposition speech.	19 1893: Albert R. Robinson patents electric railway trolley.	20 1830: First National Convention of Free Men agrees to boycott slave-produced goods.
21 1815: Gen. Andrew Jackson honors courage of black troops who fought in Battle of New Orleans. 1998: Florence Griffith Joyner, Olympic track star, dies.	22 1862: Emancipation Proclamation announced. 1989: Gen. Colin Powell is confirmed as Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, first African American to hold the post.	23 1863: Civil and women's rights advocate Mary Church Terrell born.	24 1957: Federal troops enforce court-ordered integrations as nine children integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. 2006: Influential blues guitarist Etta Baker dies.	25 1974: Barbara W. Hancock becomes first African American woman named a White House fellow.	26 1962: Sonny Liston knocks out Floyd Patterson to win heavyweight boxing championship.	27 2000: Venus Williams wins an Olympic gold medal in women's singles tennis.
28 1991: National Civil Rights Museum opens in Memphis, Tennessee. 2000: Venus and Serena Williams win Olympic gold medals in women's pairs tennis.	29 Rosh Hashanah Begins (sundown) 1910: National Urban League established in New York City.	30 1962: James Meredith enrolls as first black student at University of Mississippi.				

Fact Number 9

Low health literacy adversely impacts cancer incidence, mortality and quality of life.