The Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) has launched a new educational initiative entitled, “Children Should Know Their Grandparents: A Guide to a Healthy Heart.” The program consists of a free video and guidebook that can be viewed anytime online and obtained at the ABC website (www.abcardio.org). The program is sponsored by an unrestricted educational grant from Novartis Pharmaceutical Company. It is a different kind of program because it addresses the needs and culture of the African American community. The ABC was founded in 1974 to bring special attention to the adverse impact of cardiovascular disease on African Americans.

The statistics on cardiovascular disease in African Americans are indeed striking:

- African Americans are three times as likely to die from cardiovascular diseases than Caucasians.
- Nearly one in three African Americans suffers from hypertension.
- Mortality rates from hypertension are substantially greater in African Americans than Caucasians. In 1995 the death rate was 355% higher in African American males and 352% higher in African American females than in white males and females, respectively.
- Salt sensitivity is more common among the African American population than other ethnic groups, and it can influence the effect of some anti-hypertensive drugs.
- African Americans are 1.5 times more likely to die of heart failure than Caucasians.
- African American men younger than age 60 are twice as likely as Caucasian men of that age to be hospitalized for heart failure, while African American women are three times as likely as Caucasian women of similar age to be hospitalized because of the disease.
- In 1995 death from coronary heart disease was 40% higher in African Americans than Caucasians.
- From ages 35 to 74, the age-adjusted death rate from coronary heart disease for African American women is more than 71% higher than that of Caucasian women.
- Young African Americans have a two- to three-fold greater risk of suffering a stroke and a 1.8-fold greater mortality rate for stroke than Caucasians.
- The estimated age-adjusted prevalence of stroke for non-Hispanic African Americans ≥20 years is 2.5% for men and 3.2% for women.

In recent heart failure trials, questions have been raised about the effectiveness of ACE inhibitors and beta blockers in the African American population. Reports have also suggested that African American patients may not necessarily receive catheterization or other procedures at the same rate as white patients. Thus, issues of race are very important medical considerations in today’s society.

Having viewed the video and read the booklet, I believe that it is a useful addition for any physician who cares for African American patients as I do. The 30-min video features medical experts and real-life patients who teach viewers about the signs and symptoms of heart disease and stroke and give meaningful advice individuals can follow to prevent or reduce their risk. I applaud Novartis for supporting this initiative, because it represents a wonderful use of pharmaceutical funding for improving the health of the nation. I also support the objective of the ABC that African American children (and indeed all children) know their grandparents and become great grandparents themselves.

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