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## New Study Highlights Motivation for Healthier Lifestyles

African Americans are more motivated to pursue healthier lifestyles than non-African Americans, a new study shows, but when asked individually are less likely to describe themselves as being in good health.

The recently published African American Health Engagement Study highlights that 75 percent of African-American respondents are taking steps to stay healthy. However, only 36 percent of respondents consider their overall health, described as their physical, mental/emotional, and spiritual health, as “very good” or “excellent.”

As for sources of information related to health and medical care, respondents said they are more trusting of organizations, professionals, and support systems who focus on African Americans.

The study was conducted by the [National Medical Association](#), the [National Black Nurses Association](#), and the pharmaceutical company Pfizer, the manufacturer of Quillivant, a brand name medication for ADHD.

“As the collective voice for African-American physicians and the leading voice for parity and justice in medicine and increasing health equity, the National Medical Association, in alliance with the National Black Nurses Association and Pfizer, will work together to address the underlying causes of health inequity with greater creativity, innovation, and precision,” says Doris Browne, MD, president of the National Medical Association.



### Stigma interferes with treatment for ADHD

It's estimated that about [10.7 percent of school-aged](#) African-American children have ADHD, but diagnosis and effective treatment rates remain lower than among other demographics.

“There is no single African-American experience,” write [Gail A. Mattox, MD](#) and [Sarah Y. Vinson, MD](#), in *Culturally Competent Approaches to ADHD: Issues in African-American Populations*. They note that racial and ethnic disparities in diagnosing ADHD continue and that research indicates that ADHD among African-American youth may be underdiagnosed when compared to white youth.

“Mental health stigma has been found to be a significant factor in African-American treatment engagement,” Dr. Mattox and Dr. Vinson write. “For this reason, taking steps to

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bolster the families' exposure to supportive contacts, both in the community and within the mental health system can be critical interventions. Identification of and links to supportive contacts can be particularly helpful."

"A lot of people in the African-American community choose not to get their children diagnosed based on some mistrust and a cultural stigma when they have a child who has been labeled as having ADHD," says [Cheryl Hamilton, MA](#), a licensed professional counselor who treats members of the African-American community. "And there is a lack of awareness and education, and the fear of medication, and what that means when you have a child who has ADHD."

Families would prefer to see children's behavior as normal or even to label it as misbehavior or being "bad," she says, than to attribute it to ADHD. This can lead to greater difficulties for the child, at home and at school, placing some children at risk of negative contact with law enforcement.

Her suggestion is to build relationships among the support systems available to the family when it comes to ADHD and other health conditions. The stronger the relationship, the greater the opportunity for a positive outcome, she says.

"Starting where they are and recognizing the support systems they have, I believe, the client will have a better outcome, the treatment plan will be more effective," [she says](#).

### **Improving health equality, for ADHD and other conditions**

The sponsors of the African American Health Engagement Study hope it will provide additional insight in areas where health organizations can coordinate efforts to increase health equity and facilitate more effective health-seeking behaviors in African Americans through health education and community initiatives. The information can be used to launch more target initiatives for

specific health care concerns in African-American communities.

"Certain medical conditions are more prevalent and devastating for African Americans and other populations of color," says Freda Lewis-Hall, MD, the chief medical officer and executive vice president of Pfizer. "We see our partnership with the National Black Nurses Association and the National Medical Association as a critical way to increase trust and communication and better meet the health needs of African Americans."

"Our participation in the study helps us better understand health attitudes and behaviors of African Americans," says Eric J. Williams, DNP, RN, CNE, FAAN, the president of the National Black Nurses Association. "Through our partnership with Pfizer and the National Medical Association, we are working to develop a sustainable plan of action that will make an impact on critical disparities that affect the health of our community."

### **Read more about this study:**

[New Study Provides Critical Insights on Unique Health Needs of African Americans](#)

### **Looking for more?**

- [Video: Treating ADHD in the African-American Community](#)
- [Ask the Expert: African-American Families and ADHD](#)
- [Tackling Myths and Misinformation](#)