

on indoor smoking in the City of Philadelphia. He was also the recipient of a citation (“Honoring Charles R. Bridges”) from the Philadelphia City Council in 2004.

Bridges has two issued U.S. patents (#5,983,142 and #6,673,039) and four pending U.S. and international patents for inventions in the fields of cardiovascular devices, and cardiac and systemic gene and cell delivery. He serves as a consultant to the circulatory system devices panel of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. His clinical research interests include several completed and ongoing large-scale multivariate analyses of

cardiac surgical outcomes through the STS in collaboration with the Duke Clinical Research Institute. He has been married for more than 25 years to his wife Renee, and has three daughters—Hillary, 20, a junior and a John B. Ervin scholar at Washington University in St. Louis, MO; Amanda, 19, a sophomore at Harvard University; and Lauren, 15.

Bridges maintains an active clinical cardiac surgery practice with special interest in transfusion-free cardiac surgery, minimally invasive mitral and aortic valve surgery, arrhythmia surgery and complex aortic surgery.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The opinions expressed here are not necessarily the opinions of the National Medical Association.

Sleep Duration among Black and White Americans

To the Editor:

“Sleep Duration among Black and White Americans: Results of the National Health Interview Survey” in the March 2008 issue of *JNMA*¹ provided some potential answers for an observation on the prevalence of isolated sleep paralysis in African Americans that we made several years ago.²⁻⁴

Essentially, our research found African Americans had more isolated sleep paralysis than whites, and that frequent attacks isolated sleep paralysis (≥ 1 a month) was associated with panic disorder. Japanese researchers⁵ added a big piece to the puzzle when they discovered that the interruption of sleep (a frequent occurrence when individuals are under stress) could elicit isolated sleep paralysis; however, this discovery did not explain why African Americans would have such a high prevalence of isolated sleep paralysis. Friedman et al.⁶ and Neal-Barnett and Crowther⁷ confirmed our original observation in their own research projects that independently

replicated our work, but potential explanations for the empirical observation that African Americans had a high prevalence of isolated sleep paralysis were still elusive.

Unfortunately, as Dr. Satcher’s Culture, Race and Ethnicity Report⁸ highlights, because there is so little known about African-American health and mental health, we are frequently unprepared to understand the etiology of some of the empirical observations we make about African-American populations. Thankfully, because *JNMA* publishes articles such as the one by Nunes et al.,¹ we are able to glean more information that provides potential explanations for our empirical observations. Nunes et al.’s¹ finding that “blacks were less likely than whites to report sleeping 7 hours (23% vs. 30%; $\chi^2=94$, $p<0.0001$) while being more likely to experience both short sleep (≤ 5 hours; 12% vs. 8%, $\chi^2=44$, $p<0.0001$),” and with Takeuchi et al.’s⁵ observations that interruption of sleep induces isolated sleep paralysis, fit together to offer potential mechanisms to explain the high prevalence of isolated sleep paralysis in African Americans.

I will be forever grateful to *JNMA* for being there and helping to fill the void of empirical information about the health and well-being of African-American populations—information that is critical for our

understanding as we try to provide medical services to our population.

REFERENCES

- Nunes J, Jean-Louis G, Zizi F, et al. Sleep Duration among Black and White Americans: Results of the National Health Interview Survey. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 2008;100:317-322.
- Bell CC, Shakoor B, Thompson B, et al. The Prevalence of Isolated Sleep Paralysis in Blacks. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 1984;76:501-508.
- Bell CC, Dixie-Bell DD, Thompson B. Further studies on the prevalence of isolated sleep paralysis in Black subjects. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 1986;78:649-659.
- Bell CC, Hildreth C, Jenkins EJ, et al. The Relationship Between Isolated Sleep Paralysis, Panic Disorder, and Hypertension. *J Natl Med Assoc.* 1988;80:289-294.
- Takeuchi T, Miyasita A, Sasaki Y, et al. Isolated Sleep Paralysis Elicited by Sleep Interruption. *Sleep.* 1992;15:217-225.
- Friedman S, Paradis CM, Hatch M. “Characteristics of African-American and White Patients With Panic Disorder and Agoraphobia”. *Hosp Community Psychiatry.* 1994;45(8):798-803.
- Drs. Angela M. Neal-Barnett and Janis H. Crowther reported the incidence of isolated sleep paralysis on a small sample of fifty African-American women. *Psychol Women Q.* 2000;24:129-136.
- U.S. Public Health Service (2001). *Mental Health: Culture, Race, and Ethnicity: A Supplement to Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General.* Rockville, MD: U.S. Public Health Service. www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mental-health/cre/. Accessed 01/28/08.

Carl C. Bell, MD
President/CEO
Community Mental Health
Council Inc.
8704 S. Constance
Chicago, IL 60617
carlcbell@pol.net