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**Health Leaders Join To Elevate  
Sudden Cardiac Arrest To a National Public Health Priority**

*The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports SCA-related deaths are on the rise killing nearly 1,000 people a day*

**Washington, DC** - In an effort to boost public awareness of sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), a leading cause of death in the U.S., the National Medical Association (NMA) convened top medical professionals, government officials and patient advocacy organizations in Washington, D.C. to address this under-recognized public health epidemic. At the SCA Leadership Conference, held on April 15, 2008, prominent health leaders addressed SCA risk factors, prevention measures, health disparities associated with the disease, and diagnosis and treatment options.

“More than 300,000 lives are lost every year due to the rising epidemic of sudden cardiac arrest. This public health crisis kills more people than lung cancer, breast cancer and HIV/AIDS combined,” said Dr. Nelson L. Adams, III, President of National Medical Association. “Particularly alarming is that SCA disproportionately affects African-Americans and women, the majority of whom die before ever reaching emergency care and that adequate data is not available for Hispanics.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in 2001 that SCA-related deaths are on the rise according to data from 1989 to 1996. In just 10 years, deaths from SCA increased 10 percent in people ages 15 to 34. In all, nearly 1,000 people a day die of SCA.

Organizations that participated in the conference included the American College of Cardiology, Association of Black Cardiologists, Heart Rhythm Society, Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association, National Alliance for Hispanic Health, and WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease.

At the conclusion of the SCA Leadership Conference, the NMA and the participating organizations issued the following statement:

*“As a matter of public policy, we believe a successful change in health outcomes related to SCA requires continued involvement from community and health leaders.*

*The conference served as a platform to discuss the human impact caused by SCA and to build consensus solutions to overcome obstacles that the medical community confronts when diagnosing and treating SCA.”*

Goals of the leadership conference included:

- Bringing together the nation’s leading health influencers to develop a plan of action for educating the public about SCA and its risk factors, which will serve as the catalyst to institute national public awareness surrounding SCA.



- Identifying and addressing ways to overcome existing health disparities to ensure all people are diagnosed properly and treated for SCA.
- Developing a set of strategies to overcome current barriers that limit healthcare professionals' abilities to aggressively diagnose and treat patients.

The conference participants are developing a white paper with a number of proposed initiatives designed to galvanize leaders from the medical field, industry, government and patient advocacy groups.

### **About Sudden Cardiac Arrest**

SCA occurs when the lower chambers of the heart start beating very fast, weakly and abnormally, preventing the heart from pumping blood to the body and brain. Untreated, it leads to death within minutes. SCA is not a heart attack, when blood flow to the heart muscle is blocked, resulting in damage due to a lack of oxygen. Rather, SCA is an electrical problem similar to a short in a wire, the intermittent signal causes the heart to pump erratically preventing blood flow, and oxygen from the heart from reaching the rest of the body.

### **About the National Medical Association**

The National Medical Association (NMA) is the largest and oldest national organization representing African-American physicians and their patients in the United States. The NMA is a 501(c) (3) national professional and scientific organization representing the interests of more than 30,000 African-American physicians and the patients they serve. NMA is committed to improving the quality of health among minorities and disadvantaged people through its membership, professional development, community health education, advocacy, research and partnerships with federal and private agencies. As the conscience of medicine, the National Medical Association has focused primarily on health issues related to African-Americans and medically underserved populations; however, its principles, goals, initiatives and philosophy encompass all ethnic groups.

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