

# Destination Health

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## A Trial's Not Always A Tribulation



Many African Americans are cautious, if not downright suspicious, when new or experimental medical procedures are suggested as options for our care. The unease includes our notions about medical research studies in which volunteers test new methods of prevention, screening, diagnosis or treatment of a disease. Our misgivings are rooted in a racist past when a few government-sponsored programs misled and used Blacks in studies like the now-notorious Tuskegee Syphilis experiment. Thankfully, those days are long gone. Studies are now regulated by an institutional review board that's not connected with the research study. This helps to ensure that the study is conducted in an ethical and appropriate manner.

With African Americans ranking in the top tier of deadly diseases, including many types of cancer, diabetes, hypertension, stroke and heart disease, *it is to our advantage to be proactive about participating in clinical trials that promote cures.* For example, many of today's approved cancer treatments were first proven in clinical trials. Trials help inform doctors if a new treatment is effective and safe. Thousands have survived cancer because of breakthroughs that came from clinical trial research.

April 16 through 21 is **Minority Cancer Awareness Week**. Research has shown that Blacks lead in cancer death rates for a number of reasons, including poor access to health care due to poverty, low or no health insurance coverage, and lack of information about cancer and environmental /lifestyle issues that put us at higher risk. If you're a cancer patient, or you know

someone who is, consider participating in a clinical trial. Georgia CORE (Center for Oncology, Research and Education) has partnered with the Coalition of Cancer Cooperative Groups to design a unique, statewide database of clinical trials in Georgia called Georgia Cancer Trials. The free, quick and easy-to-use database searches by cancer type and uses ZIP codes to provide listings of cancer clinical trials near your home or work. The search engine asks 9 questions to help determine the best clinical trials. Many of Georgia's oncologists offer clinical trials in their offices, clinics or in hospitals. Regular health screenings and medication are often offered during the trial period—a life-saving benefit for those without health insurance or people who have only sporadic health care.

If you are interested in more information about the Georgia Cancer Trials registry, please visit [www.GeorgiaCancerTrials.org](http://www.GeorgiaCancerTrials.org) to find a trial that could benefit you or a loved one. The registry has a listing of approximately 250 adult cancer clinical trials throughout the state. Information gathered from the Georgia Cancer Trials registry should be used as a tool to speak with your doctor about cancer clinical trials that are right for you or your loved one.

Georgia CORE is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization whose mission is to improve the quality of cancer care in Georgia by strengthening clinical research. For more information, visit [www.georgiacore.org](http://www.georgiacore.org) or call (404) 523-8735.

Remember, a trial isn't always a tribulation. Participating in a clinical trial advances scientific knowledge that saves lives.



The Community Health Communications Network newsletter is provided **free** to all CHCN member organizations. Feel free to copy this and pass it on to your members and your community.

The CHCN was created by BioTechnical Communications to assist African-American church and community organizations in encouraging their members to make healthy lifestyle choices.

To join the CHCN or for more information about these and other health issues, please visit [www.journeytowellness.com](http://www.journeytowellness.com) or call 404-364-1878.

## Atlanta Geriatrician Fills a Void In Elder Care

Dr. Germaine Cummings is special for several reasons. First, she’s one of only about five physicians in her field in Georgia. Second, that field is the little-known but important specialty of geriatrics—health care for the elderly. Third, Dr. Cummings still makes house calls!

This extraordinary physician is a native of Augusta, GA, and a 1999 graduate of Morehouse Medical School. She did her residency at Baylor University in Houston and completed a fellowship in geriatrics at Emory University. Dr. Cummings is a busy woman. With her flagship office in Loganville and a new office opening this month on Powers Ferry Road in Marietta, her days are filled caring for aging patients and advising their families on matters as diverse as nutrition for elders and suggesting relief for their overstressed caretakers.

Dr. Cummings chose geriatrics as a specialty to fill a void in the very

specific physical, emotional and psycho-social needs of increasing numbers of aging patients. “The fact is, we’re living longer,” she says. “Every stage of human life is unique and presents different health-care challenges and answers. Family physicians are generally ill-equipped to address the total needs of aging patients and the families who care for them.”

Those unique challenges include finding solutions for dementia—a mind-altering condition that can begin as early as age 50—or dealing with end-of-life issues like identifying hospice care. Dr. Cummings says, “Few family doctors are familiar with all the resources Medicare offers the elderly that can help families cope with long-term care needs without breaking the bank. For example, Medicare covers 100% of hospice care expenses, whether a patient needs that care for six months, six years or longer.”



When asked about the house calls, Dr. Cummings said it’s a service and a courtesy she offers patients she’s seen in her office at least once, who have difficulty getting out for simple screenings and check-ups. “It’s part of the caring solution that preserves dignity and offers comfort to people who’ve lived long enough to deserve both.”

Dr. Cummings can be reached at **(770) 554-8828**.



## In Our Community

Listen Up! Two in-depth 60-minute Journey to Wellness documentaries will air on WCLK-FM and WABE-FM radio this month. The subjects are Breast Cancer and Prostate Cancer in the African-American Community, with one program devoted to each topic. Tune in to hear experts like Dr. Otis Brawley of the Winship Cancer Institute, Dr. Eddie Reed of the Centers for Disease Control, Dr. Allen Simpson of the Comprehensive Men’s Health Initiative and Dr. Rogsburt Phillips of Emory Crawford Long Hospital weigh in on these critically important subjects. On WABE, the breast cancer program will air April 16 and the prostate cancer program will air April 23, both at 7 p.m. WCLK will air the breast cancer program on April 15 and the prostate cancer program on April 29, both at 3 p.m.

