

# One woman's war against cancer focuses on the black community

Times Tribune staff

Bertha Price is well aware of the rising rates of cancer, especially among blacks. As the public information officer at Drew Medical Center in East Palo Alto and a member of the community education committee of the American Cancer Society's Burlingame chapter, she wants to help put a stop to the frightening trend.

"The high incidence of cancer and its high fatality rate in the black community are due to the lack of education," Price said recently in her office at Drew.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, blacks have suffered higher rates of cancer because of common economic, environmental and social factors. Blacks are not diagnosed as often, do not identify symptoms as soon and have limited educational opportunities relative to whites, the department says. Therefore, they generally are not as aware of cancer's symptoms and

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dangers.

Also according to the department, the fatality rate of cancer among blacks has risen 34 percent in the past 25 years, nearly four times the 9 percent increase for whites during the same period. In 1983, the rate of cancer jumped 27 percent, compared to a 12 percent increase among whites.

In the first step in her campaign to help educate East Palo Alto residents, Price plans to distribute literature on the causes and symptoms of various cancers and cancer-causing substances throughout East Palo Alto. She said she will leave pamphlets and packets of information in highly accessible areas, including the city's barber shops and beauty salons.

Ultimately, Price would like to establish an American Cancer Society branch in East Palo Alto.

Price has worked with the American Cancer Society regional chapter in Burlingame — presently the closest branch to East Palo Alto — since 1976. Her experience tells her that an East Palo Alto chapter would help a great deal.

"When there's an office around here," Price said, "all the cancer society's research equipment and educational materials will be close at hand."

Price's fight against cancer in East Palo Alto coincides with the cancer society's Cancer Awareness Week, which begins April 2. Drew Medical Center's Health Fair on April 5 also will emphasize cancer prevention and treatment.

"I think it's time for them to form their own branch" in the East Palo Alto area, said Pearl Armstrong, educational director of the San Mateo County regional office in Burlingame. Though no office would be set up in the city, an official branch would help organize community leaders and make the society's facilities more accessible.



Bertha Price  
... stresses education.