
Media Contact: Sandy Van
Telephone: 1-800-880-2397
E-mail: sandy@prpacific.com

Black History Month Media Advisory

ORGANIZATION OF PROMINENT BLACK WOMEN SUPPORTS MEDICAL HISTORY IN THE MAKING

LOS ANGELES (Feb. 12, 2008) – When a research scientist in the Department of Neurosurgery at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center discovers a molecular target that makes brain tumor cells more susceptible to treatment, Pauletta Washington, Keisha Whitaker and Dale Cochran are standing by.

When the life of a patient is extended by months or years because an experimental vaccine fights malignant brain tumor cells, Gloria Mitchell, Yolanda “Cookie” Parker, Carol Bennett, M.D., and Angelia Sanders cannot be far away – at least in spirit and support.

All are members of a rare if not unique organization of African-American women raising funds for medicine and research.

“These women play a role in every discovery our researchers make. Through their generous gifts of time, talent and resources, they are behind virtually every aspect of our work, increasing funding and awareness of advances in research and treatment,” said neurosurgeon Keith L. Black, M.D., chairman of Cedars-Sinai Medical Center’s Department of Neurosurgery and director of The Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Brain Tumor Center and the Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute.

The women of the Brain Trust, capitalizing on their personal influence and connections in entertainment and other industries, draw attention and donations to programs that target brain tumors and other central nervous system disorders. Pauletta Washington and Keisha Nash-Whitaker have enlisted the participation of their husbands, Academy Award-winning actors Denzel Washington and Forest Whitaker, both of whom have become contributors and outspoken supporters.

Founded by Linda Burrows, a grateful patient, the group has contributed about \$10.5 million since 1998. During that time, Cedars-Sinai research teams have made advances in immunotherapy; mechanisms of brain tumor cells, brain tumor stem cells, and neural stem cells; molecular targets in blood vessel cells that promote the recurrence of tumors; delivery of chemotherapy through the blood brain tumor barrier; a versatile drug-delivery system based on nanotechnology; and other innovative projects and strategies. As a result of a dendritic cell vaccine pioneered by Black and his colleagues, life expectancy for patients suffering from the most aggressive form of brain cancer has begun to increase.

The realization of the Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. Brain Tumor Center is an example of the star power, charisma and clout the Brain Trust has to offer. The group raised more than \$5 million for the project, and numerous notable personalities – including music producer Rickey Minor, Grammy award-winning singer Nancy

(more)

Wilson and talk-show host Larry King – participated in a gala last May.

Black, who joined Cedars-Sinai in 1997 and holds the Ruth and Lawrence Harvey Chair in Neurosciences, is available to provide information on studies and milestones in brain cancer research. Each of the women of the Brain Trust is available to discuss her reasons for involvement. The members are (alphabetically):

Carol Bennett, MD – Chief of Urology at the Greater Los Angeles Veterans' Hospital Healthcare System, sits on many boards, actively involved in schools, mother of two, wife of Dr. Keith Black. Dr. Bennett has earned a distinguished reputation through her work with the VA, as a surgeon and as a professor of urology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Dale Cochran – Entrepreneur and philanthropist, community activist, world traveler, widow of world-renowned attorney and civil rights leader Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. She works to keep her late husband's legacy alive in the community with youth programs designed to encourage young people to stay in school and lead active, healthy lives. She led the effort to bring to reality The Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Brain Tumor Center at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center.

Gloria Mitchell – Owner of a medical center in south central Los Angeles, philanthropist, community supporter, political activist, mother of five, grandmother of four. She and her husband, Dr. Accie Mitchell, continue to be involved in the community, working to bring hope and renewal to children and their families in the impoverished and underserved areas of Los Angeles. Gloria's keen business sense has kept projects on target and on budget.

Yolanda "Cookie" Parker – CEO of KMS Software, philanthropist, mother of two, political activist, entrepreneur. Cookie's unique ability to work and communicate with diverse groups and bring them together has provided a strong foundation on which to build The Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Brain Tumor Center and other projects.

Angelia Sanders – Vice president of the Recording Academy (The Grammys), mother of two young children, sits on several boards, active in children's schools. Angelia has climbed the ladder in the record industry, having worked at Motown, BMG, and RCA record labels, and has helped to build the careers of Grammy Award winners Stevie Wonder, Lionel Richie and Will Smith, to name a few. Angelia's contacts in the world of entertainment have enriched the work of the Brain Trust immeasurably.

Pauletta Washington – Singer, actor, classically trained pianist, philanthropist, and mother of four children, actively involved in children's schools, wife of Academy award-winning actor Denzel Washington. The couple lends their names and time to the Pauletta and Denzel Washington Family Gifted Scholars Award in Neuroscience, given annually by the Department of Neurosurgery to support two aspiring scientists.

Keisha Nash-Whitaker – Model, philanthropist, active mother of four, and wife of Academy Award-winning actor Forest Whitaker. Keisha has worked diligently to enlist the support of high-level figures in the entertainment industry in the creation of projects such as The Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr. Brain Tumor Center. One such supporter is Forest, whose grandmother was treated by Black after being diagnosed with a brain tumor several years ago.