Can Hip-Hop Help Minority Children Recognize Signs of Stroke?

A new program uses hip-hop music and educational lyrics to raise awareness among kids and parents in communities most affected by stroke.

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The National Stroke Association asserts that minorities face both a higher risk of stroke and of having it occur at an earlier age as well as more severe strokes. In response, scientists created a hip-hop intervention program to raise stroke awareness among minority children and their parents, according to new research published in the journal Stroke, reports the American Heart Association.

For the study, researchers assessed the effects of Hip Hop Stroke, a fun, free three-hour interactive health education program, on more than 3,000 students in grades 4 through 6 from 22 public schools in New York City and 1,144 of their parents.

Findings showed that the intervention increased the youngsters' understanding of what stroke is, how this interruption in blood flow to the brain happens, how to recognize the signs and symptoms of the condition and what to do if this emergency occurs.

Scientists noted that after the intervention children's knowledge about stroke soared from 2 percent to 57 percent. What's more, after three months, 24 percent of kids retained their stroke knowledge, and four children used their newfound awareness to call 911 in real-life stroke situations.

In addition, immediately after the program 20 percent of parents could identify all signs of stroke and when to call 911 according to the FAST acronym, which stands for: Face drooping, Arm weakness, Speech difficulty and Time to call the police. (Only 3 percent of adults recalled the meaning of FAST prior to the educational game; three months later 17 percent of parents were successful.)

"The program's culturally tailored multimedia presentation is particularly effective among minority youth or other groups among whom hip-hop music is popular," said Olajide Williams, MD, MS, an associate professor of neurology at Columbia University Medical Center, New York Presbyterian Hospital, and a study author.

Kids who remembered what they learned about stroke from the program relayed the information to their families. Williams observed that this is an effective way to potentially decrease stroke fatalities in minority communities, especially among African-Americans, who suffer the highest rate of death due to stroke.

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