

# SEPTEMBER HEALTH OBSERVANCE TOPIC

## SICKLE CELL DISEASE

### **What is Sickle Cell Disease?**

Sickle cell disease is an inherited blood disorder that affects red blood cells. People with sickle cell disease have red blood cells that contain mostly hemoglobin\* S, an abnormal type of hemoglobin. Sometimes these red blood cells become sickle-shaped (crescent shaped) and have difficulty passing through small blood vessels. The disease is characterized primarily by chronic anemia and periodic episodes of pain.

### **How Common Is Sickle Cell Anemia?**

In this country, Sickle Cell Disease affects approximately 72,000 people, most of whose ancestors come from Africa. The disease occurs in approximately 1 in every 500 African-American births and 1 in every 1,000-1,400 Hispanic-American births.

### **What is Sickle Cell Trait?**

Sickle Cell trait (AS) is an inherited condition in which both hemoglobin A and S are produced in the red blood cells, always more A than S. Sickle cell trait is not a type of sickle cell disease. People with sickle cell trait are generally healthy.

### **How Can You Learn More About the Disease?**

September is National Sickle Cell Awareness Month. Because it is "back to school" month for most children, the Sickle Cell Disease Association of America wants the public to reflect on the children and the adults whose lives, education and careers have been affected by this disease. The observance originated in 1975 when the Association and its Member Organizations began conducting month long events to call attention to sickle cell disease and the need to address the problem at national and local levels.

The Association and its Member Organizations sponsored public educational programs and fund raising activities during the month. State and local government officials issue Sickle Cell Month proclamations and are introduced to local poster children.

The effort to have Sickle Cell Month officially recognized at all levels succeeded in 1983 when the House of Representatives unanimously passed the resolution, introduced by the Congressional Black Caucus, asking President Reagan to

designate September as "National Sickle Cell Anemia Awareness Month." The President signed the resolution in August of 1983.

For educational materials to display during Sickle Cell Awareness Month call (800) 421-8453 or e-mail your request to [scdaa@sicklecelldisease.org](mailto:scdaa@sicklecelldisease.org). For information on activities sponsored by your local SCDA Member Organization, please click [here](#).

For more detailed information about Sickle Cell Disease, visit [http://www.sicklecelldisease.org/about\\_scd/index.phtml](http://www.sicklecelldisease.org/about_scd/index.phtml)

**[Source: SCDA website, 8/19/06]**

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