



American Public Health Association

800 I Street, NW • Washington, DC 20001-3710

(202) 777-APHA • Fax: (202) 777-2534 • comments@apha.org • <http://www.apha.org>

February 24, 2004

David Combs, PhD
Deputy Director of Education
California Science Center
700 State Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90037

REMINDER: National Public Health Week is April 5-11

Dear Dr. Combs:

Each year the American Public Health Association (APHA) joins with local and national public health groups to celebrate the first week in April as National Public Health Week. The theme for 2004 is eliminating health disparities and the goal is to remind us all that the health of racial and ethnic minority populations still lags far behind non-minority populations, despite major advances in public health and medical science. We also know that some disparities exist for non-minority populations. Enclosed is a fact sheet that talks further about health disparities.

I write today to encourage you and your fellow museum and science center colleagues who have joined APHA in supporting the National Public Health Partnership (NPHP) to consider addressing this issue as part of your institution's participation in National Public Health Week. I also have a suggestion for how you might participate: Focus your efforts on environmental health and cancer, two areas of health disparities that museums and science centers tell us are of special interest to their visitors. Focusing attention on one or both of these issues would be of real value to the National Public Health Week discussion in your community.

Here are a few reasons why these two subjects are so important:

Research has linked **environmental conditions** to a broad range of health conditions. Research data also says that exposure to environmental risks varies considerably based on income, race, and ethnicity.

We know that **cancer** incidence and death rates vary based on a person's race and ethnicity, and it is the second leading cause of death in the U.S. causing more than 500,000 deaths each year. African-Americans have a cancer death rate about 35 percent higher than for whites and Alaska Natives have a 40 percent higher death rate than for whites. Whites have higher incidence rates of leukemia than blacks and the highest incidence rates of melanoma among all groups.

I'd like to encourage the California Science Center to partner with local public health groups commemorating National Health Week and host a health screening fair, town hall meeting, or other programs to help educate the community about health disparities and efforts underway to address the problem. APHA's Health Week database can identify groups in the Los Angeles area. Claudia Menashe, NPHP Project Director at the National Health Museum in Washington DC, can help facilitate such collaboration. Claudia is at 202-737- 2670 or cmenashe@nationalhealthmuseum.org.

For more information and ideas about how to participate, please take a moment to review APHA's Web site for National Public Health Week at <http://www.apha.org/nphw/>. This site was developed to assist local communities with the planning of activities and includes additional facts about health disparities, a toolkit and planner's guide for the week, and much more. It also provides an easy means for you to set up a temporary promotional link from your Web site to the National Public Health Week Web site.

Your commitment to providing reliable public health and science information to your visitors and community is greatly appreciated. It is my hope that you will further this commitment by commemorating National Public Health Week 2004 at the California Science Center.

Sincerely,


George C. Benjamin, MD, FACP
Executive Director

Enclosure