



VHC PARTNER:

The Prostate Health Education Network

BY THOMAS A. FARRINGTON

The Prostate Health Education Network is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization founded in 2003. Black men in the U.S. have a 60 percent greater prostate cancer incidence rate and are 2.3 times more likely to die from the disease than men of all other racial and ethnic groups. This is the largest racial disparity for any type of major cancer. PHEN’s mission is to work toward eliminating this disparity through increasing knowledge and awareness among African Americans. To support this mission, PHEN implemented eight national initiatives:



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The PHEN Survivor Network was established in 2003 to mobilize black prostate cancer survivors to support educational outreach in their communities. **Monthly Support Group Meetings** began in 2003 in partnership with the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. The meetings bring survivors and their families together to learn about new prostate cancer developments, treatments, and clinical trials. Monthly webcasts of the meetings’ educational presentations became the centerpiece of PHEN’s social media outreach initiative. **The Annual African American Prostate Cancer Disparity Summit** began in 2005 to address policy, medical, and community outreach initiatives toward eliminating the prostate cancer racial disparity. It is a two-day program hosted in Washington, D.C., with live streaming. VVA President John Rowan spoke at PHEN’S fifteenth summit in September as part of a discussion about

the unique prostate health educational needs of veterans, as well as strategies to address these needs. He emphasized that VVA’s partnership with PHEN will allow both organizations to better educate African-American veterans and their families about prostate cancer.

PHEN Online Television, www.PHENTV.com, which began broadcasting in 2007, brings educational videos developed from PHEN’s programs to men and their families at home.

The Annual Father’s Day Rally was launched in 2009 in partnership with churches around the U.S. to increase prostate health awareness during Father’s Day church services.

Educational Symposia hosted by church partners began in 2013 as an outgrowth of the Father’s Day Rally. These events, open to both men and women, are structured by PHEN to increase prostate health knowledge.

PHEN’s **Clinical Trials Rally** began in 2017 to increase African American participation in prostate cancer clinical trials.

Daddy’s Boy, a Broadway-style stage play, began touring in 2018. It educates audiences about prostate cancer. PHEN’s largest event, it often attracts as many as a thousand people. Audience surveys testify to its educational success.

In March, PHEN President Thomas Farrington and Director of Partnership Development Adrian Backus met with VVA’s Director of Government Affairs Rick Weidman and VHC Director Dr. Artie Shelton, along with Assistant Directors Maureen Elias and Rebecca Patterson, to discuss collaborative efforts between PHEN and VHC to support the prostate health needs of veterans.

During VHC’s Partnership and Advocacy Meeting (see July/August, p. 10) on June 13, Rowan discussed how toxic military environmental exposures, especially to Agent Orange, have caused irreparable harm to many Vietnam veterans. Elias’ “The Battle for Veteran-Centric Health Care: Prostate Cancer and Vietnam Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange” (see July/August 2018, p. 32) was highlighted. Rowan expressed his desire to work with PHEN to implement an effective Vietnam veterans prostate cancer outreach effort.

Thomas Farrington, a prostate cancer survivor, is the founder of the Prostate Health Education Network. Contact PHEN at www.prostatehealth.org

