

American Legacy Multicultural Healthcare Awards

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B. Wayne Kong, J.D., Ph.D.

Heart health for African-Americans has improved dramatically, and we have the Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) to thank for it. And ABC has Dr. B. Wayne Kong, J.D. Ph.D., to thank because as its CEO for 21 years, he led that organization of African-American heart specialists toward its expansive goal of eliminating heart disease, the number one cause of death in the U.S. for black Americans as well as white.

Today, as the Executive Vice President of Heart Institute of the Caribbean, Kong continues to lead major heart research initiatives and public health campaigns. These have included more than 50 scientific publications and several books written edited by Dr. Kong, who offers three pieces of advice to African-Americans who wish to improve their health: "Go to church, make lots of money, but don't get fat."

Medical leader, author, lawyer, academic—all these labels apply, so the versatile Dr. Kong is right to describe himself as an innovator who, for example, pioneered the training of volunteers to set up clinics in churches and barbershops.

Born in Kingston, Jamaica, Dr. Kong was only 15 when he arrived in New Jersey, where he attended Morristown High School before winning a track scholarship to Simpson College in Iowa (where George Washington Carver also was educated). Kong subsequently received degrees from American University in Washington, D.C., and the University of Maryland. He earned a Ph.D. from Walden University and a J.D. from Dickenson School of Law.

How did a lawyer rise to this pinnacle of cardiovascular health research and education? "I was driven by passion and personal losses. I want our children to know the love, nurturing and guidance of their grandparents. If we are ever going to solve our social problems, we need grandparents," said Kong, who with his wife, pediatrician Dr. Stephanie Kong plays that role for their own four grandchildren. The Kongs' children have followed in their high-achieving footsteps: Jillian Kong-Sivert is a lawyer; Fred Kong a convention services executive, Melanie Shaw, treats autistic children, and Aleron Kong is a medical student.

What goal beckons next? "To bring excellent cardiovascular care to developing countries," declares Dr. Kong.



Debra A. Toney, Ph.D., R.N.

Debra A. Toney, Ph.D., R.N. has amassed 28 years of expertise as a clinical scientist, in human services, and as a nurse, but for Dr. Toney, caring does not end at the hospital doors.

After being elected as the tenth president of the National Black Nurses Association (NBNA), one of Dr. Toney's earliest messages to the group was, "There is a diverse group of presidential candidates running for office. What do you know about them? Health care is a major issue on all the candidates' agendas, and they all take a different approach. Do you know the candidates stand on issues that are important to you, your family, and community?" Clearly, NBNA's health policy is in good hands because Dr. Toney's 28 years of experience

encompasses health care leadership within family practice management, ambulatory care, outpatient diagnostics, hospitals, and home health care.

She has also stated that the goals of the group include building consumer knowledge and understanding of health care issues; educating and mentoring registered nurses, licensed vocational/practical nurses, nursing students, and retired nurses; facilitating the professional development and career advancement of nurses in emerging health care systems; and, promoting economic development of nurses through entrepreneurial and other business initiatives.

Dr. Toney earned her undergraduate nursing degree from the University of Oklahoma, a graduate degree in health services administration from Illinois' University of St. Francis and a Ph.D. in human services with a specialization in health care administration from Capella University, in Minneapolis. She has managed a wide array of clinical settings such as Rainbow Medical Centers, where as CEO she was responsible for seven care centers in Las Vegas and was selected as a Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellow.

Today, as the owner of TLC Health Care Services, a licensed home health care agency with an unusually expansive array of services, she continues to exercise her commitment to quality clinical care.

In addition to being president of the NBNA, which represents 150,000 African-American nurses nationwide Dr. Toney is an active member of the American Nurses Association, founder and past president of the Southern Nevada Black Nurses Association, Nevada Nurses Association, and a board member of the National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations.