

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Illinois Director of Public Health Speaks from Experience about Prostate Cancer
Early Screening Imperative for African American Males**

CHICAGO, IL – April 19, 2010 - With African American males having a prostate cancer incidence rate that's sixty percent higher than that of white males, and a mortality rate that's more than double that of white males, it's vital to the overall health of the African American population to increase awareness of prostate cancer and encourage early screening for the disease.

"During Minority Cancer Awareness week we need to recognize prostate cancer as a disease that is unfortunately both prevalent and largely overlooked in the African American community," said Dr. Damon T. Arnold, Director of the Illinois Department of Public Health. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer in 2003 and had a prostatectomy in December of that same year. He was back to work in two weeks and deployed to Iraq four months later where he administered medical services to wounded soldiers in the field. "As an African American man and a survivor of prostate cancer, I can personally attest to the importance of early detection of the disease."

As was the case with Dr. Arnold, early-stage prostate cancer may not be associated with any obvious signs or symptoms. Knowing that his father had prostate cancer and that the disease can be hereditary, Dr. Arnold began annual screenings at age 40. He was diagnosed through a regular routine screening, which consists of a digital rectal exam (DRE) along with a prostate specific antigen (PSA) blood test. When his test results were border line, he had an ultrasound, which detected something suspicious. A biopsy confirmed that he had prostate cancer.

While recovering in his hospital bed immediately following his surgery, Dr. Arnold was watching a TV newscast. Coincidentally, one of the stories was about former United States Secretary of State Colin Powell who had also just received surgery to remove his cancerous prostate on the same day.

"I'm thankful that I received regular medical exams that resulted in early detection and treatment," continued Dr. Arnold. "I urge all men to get tested. Take care of yourself and address this issue. If you don't want to do it for yourself, do it for all of the people who would be impacted if you were gone - your wife or partner, your children, your friends, your community."

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In response to Dr. Arnold's diagnosis, he alerted his twin brother with the news. His brother quickly had his PSA tested and was subsequently diagnosed with prostate cancer before having the same surgery and the same effective outcome. Last year Dr. Arnold passed the five-year mark of being cancer free. Because he was diagnosed early and had minimal nerve damage with his prostatectomy, he doesn't have any issues with incontinence or erectile dysfunction (ED) that can result after the surgery.

Regardless of ethnicity, a man with one close relative such as a father or brother who has the disease has double the risk of developing prostate cancer. With two close relatives, his risk is five-fold. With three, the chance is 97 percent. In addition, men with a body mass index over 32.5 have about a one-third greater risk of dying from prostate cancer than men who are not obese. It is estimated that 230,000 men are diagnosed with prostate cancer every year in the United States. Approximately 2 million men live with the disease and it is estimated that nearly 30,000 men will die of prostate cancer this year.

"Us TOO International Prostate Cancer Education & Support Network provides a tremendous service to dispel the myths and fears of prostate cancer and open the door for diagnosis and treatment," noted Dr. Arnold. "Many people pull away because they're afraid of being turned down by the healthcare system or insurance companies. They fail to see their own worth by thinking that they won't be able to pay for testing and treatment. Many men think there will be no one to walk with them. But just the opposite happens."

Dr. Damon Arnold will be the kick-off speaker for the Us TOO International Summit, Symposium & 20th Anniversary Celebration for Men and their Families Battling Prostate Cancer event on August 20-21, 2010 at the Hyatt Regency O'Hare in Rosemont, IL. Dr. Arnold's presentation, "Where do we stand with prostate cancer today in Illinois and nationwide?" will be at 2:30 pm on Friday, August 20, 2010. Headquartered in Downers Grove, IL, Us TOO International (www.ustoo.org) is a grassroots, non-profit prostate cancer education and support network of 325 support group chapters worldwide, providing men and their families with free information, materials and peer-to-peer support for informed choices on detection, treatment options and information to cope with the disease. Founded in 1990, Us TOO is a registered 501-c-3 nonprofit organization and a member patient advocacy organization of the National Health Council.

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