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The Need for Logical Application-Based Extensions in Sickle Cell Disease Research Findings to Changing Lives in the Ethnic Context

Dear Editor:

I am intrigued and excited by the findings of Edwards et al. (*J Natl Med Assoc.* 2006;98:420–428) as they relate to parental influences on adult reports of pain but found the article lacking in its ability to articulate the logical and application-based extension of these findings to changing the lives of African Americans with SCD. Although their findings with respects to this SCD population are new, they are not provocative. The literature has well documented that children of substance-abusing parents are at greater risks of exhibiting both psycho- (i.e., depression, interpersonal sensitivity) and sociopathologic (i.e., maladaptive coping strategies) than their counterparts whose parents do not abuse substances.^{2,5,8} Consistent also with the literature is that high effort coping (i.e., John Henryism), particularly unrelieved psychosocial stress, may be generated by environments in which African Americans live and work—moreover among lower SES strata.^{3,4,9}

The study's attempt to explore parenting effects on reports of pain and common pain-related morbidities (substance abuse, high effort coping) fails to add substantive light on a most critical question: Is the model or risk factor(s) that places this particular group of study participants at



biologic, psychological or environmental risk one of SCD pain, substance abuse or sociocultural learning? Their research model (i.e., SCD, substance abuse, social learning) adds more to and should logically extend the compelling evidence that African Americans suffer with increasing difference in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of disease and other adverse health conditions.

Interpretations of findings speak much more to a cultural-ecological risk model, particular to African Americans rather than a general parental hypothesis.^{1,6,7,9,10} To the extent this is lost, application-based extensions will do little to change the lives of the ethnic group to which their study participants belong: “Mice may be taught better ways to swim, but the ultimate objective must be directed towards reducing the temperature of the water.”

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