Sickle Cell Anemia Is Black Disease, Here Are Two Views

DR. ANDERSON BENJAMIN FAIN

SICKLE CELL ANEMIA is a disease which affects mainly black people.

Free tests to discover Sickle Cell Anemia are being offered in Lorain. There was a clinic today at the Elks Farm. The next one will be June 3, from noon to 6 p.m. at Local 1104 United Steel Workers Hall, 2501 Broadway, Lorain.

Dr. Marvin Anderson, volunteer director of the city's free clinics, said the incurable congenital hemoglobin disease has only within the last five or six years been under serious research.

"One married couple out of every 144 will combine the trait to possibly conceive afflicted children," said Dr. Anderson. "One Negro child in every 500 will have the hemoglobin flaw."

Dr Anderson said most patients with Sickle Cell Aenmia die at the age of 20 after a life of periodic acute pain.

Commenting on the program, Dr. Anderson said that all of the blood samples are tested in Oberlin and are not passed on to "a national organization."

DR. ANDERSON EXPLAINED what is done at the clinics: If a positive carrier trait is discovered, the patient is notified and given the option of counseling.

"These people are not counseled to not have children," said Dr. Anderson.

If the disease is found, the patient is referred to a doctor.

Dr. Anderson, who lives at 2709 Skyline Dr., Lorain, suggests instruction about the disease in high school health classes. But he admits public information on the disease is scarce.

The doctor explained the tests are being paid for by the United Health Foundation.

He said black diseases can be divided into three categories: hereditary, infectious and environmental. Sickle Cell Anemia, he said, rates number one as the most occuring hereditary illness.

SOME BLACKS are suspcious of the free testing clinics for Sickle Cell Anemia. In Lorain, a number of questions were raised by Benjamin Fain, a teacher at Southview High School.

Fain charges that blacks are being used as "genetic guinea pigs" and that information through testing may possibly be used "by the government" in a program of genocide.

Fain, 48, of 2123 Ashland Ave , Lorain wondered why the National Institutes of Health has been "allotted six million dollars by the federal government" for research instead of black colleges and universities.

Fain quoted the Black Muslim newspaper, Muhammed Speaks, as saying the illness ranks "21st on the list of black killers." Fain says he thinks there "is a sinister motive involved" in the priority attention given Sickle Cell Anemia.

"They can't prevent it and they can't cure it," said Fain. "There is not even an orientation program.

Fain, active in the Lorain Black Experience Program, said blood samples and knowledge gained from them "cannot be left in the hands of the oppressors. They are trying to control the population of the underprivileged."

Fain said he has not been tested and does not plan to be tested.

Dr. Anderson said he had not discussed the Sickle Cell Anemia disease with Fain.