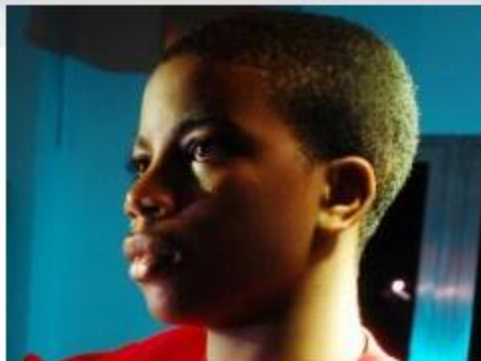


Black Youth Invents Surgical Technique - at 14

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By: Jackie Jones, BlackAmericaWeb.com



Tony Hansberry II isn't waiting to finish medical school to contribute to improved medical care. And he's only 14.

Tony Hansberry II isn't waiting to finish medical school to contribute to improved medical care. He has already developed a stitching technique that can be used to reduce surgical complications, as well as the chance of error among less experienced surgeons.

"I've always had a passion for medicine," he said in a recent interview. "The project I did was, basically, the comparison of novel laparoscopic instruments in doing a hysterectomy repair."

By the way, Hansberry is a 14-year-old high school freshman.

In April, the brilliant teen presented his findings at a medical conference at the University of Florida before an audience of doctors and board-certified surgeons.

Hansberry attends Darnell-Cookman, a special medical magnet school that allows him to take advanced classes in medicine. Students at the school master suturing in eighth grade.

"I just want to help people and be respected, knowing that I can save lives," said Hansberry, the son of a registered nurse and an African Methodist Episcopal church pastor. His goal is to become a neurosurgeon.

The idea for his procedure developed last summer during an internship at the University of Florida's Center for Simulation Education and Safety Research at Shands Hospital in Jacksonville.

Hansberry responded to a challenge to improve a procedure called the endo stitch, used in hysterectomies that could not be clamped down properly to close the tube where the patient's uterus had been. The teen devised a vertical way to apply the endo stitch and, using a medical dummy, completed the stitching in a third of the time of traditional surgery.

"It took me a day or two to come up with the concept," Hansberry said.

He was supervised by Dr. Brent Siebel, a urogynecologist, and Bruce Nappi, administrative director of the Center for Simulation Education and Safety Research. Hansberry's discovery won second place in its regional science fair in February 2009 in the medical category.



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Education experts say youngsters as young as 10 can experience great achievement at an early age if their thirst for knowledge is encouraged and they are given opportunities to shadow professionals and get internships. Also, a rigorous study schedule that also builds in some recreation is key.

High school internships and other programs are being used by educators to boost the number of young people interested in medicine in the face of projections that there will be a doctor deficit of as many as 200,000 physicians by 2020.

"It's not hard if you have a passion for it," Hansberry said.

Angela TenBroeck, the medical lead teacher, said in many ways, Hansberry is a typical student, but, she told the Florida Times Union that he is way ahead of his classmates when it comes to surgical skills.

"I would put him up against a first-year med student," she said. "He's an outstanding young man. And I'm proud to have him representing us."