



# Cancer Facts

## African Americans and Cancer

### WHO WE ARE

As African Americans, 36 million of us can trace our roots to ancestors who came to the United States involuntarily before the Civil War. Today, we number 40 million Americans and include newer immigrants from other countries, mostly Africa, the Caribbean, Central and South America. Collectively, we total approximately 13% of the total US population.<sup>(1)</sup>

More than half of us live in the Southern states, while about one-fifth live in the Northeast and Midwest. Nearly 10% of us live in the West. Over one-half of African Americans live in a central city within a major metro-

politan area. Of the estimated 33 million people who live below the poverty level, our poverty rate is significantly higher than non-Hispanic/Latino whites at 23% compared to 8%.<sup>(2)</sup> With regard to most types of cancer, as African Americans we have the highest death rate and the poorest survival rate of any racial or ethnic group in the US.<sup>(3)</sup> The reasons for these inequalities are complex and interrelated but are likely due to our lower overall standard of living, including income level, and education, among others. These economic and social barriers reduce our access to quality cancer treatment, prevention

and early detection.

Our inherited or genetic differences make only a small contribution to the unequal burden of cancer that affect our population. In the past ten years, this cancer racial disparity has begun to shrink, however, our death rate from all cancers continues to be about 33% higher in African American men and 16% higher in African American women than in our non-Hispanic/Latino white counterparts. This, along with other diseases where we bear a disproportionately higher burden, reduces our overall life expectancy by more than five years compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites.<sup>(3)</sup>

### Causes/Etiology

- African American/blacks are more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage of cancer than non-Hispanic/Latino whites, mainly due to lack of education and poverty. Twenty five percent of African American/blacks live below the poverty line.<sup>(3)</sup>
- From 1996-2002, cancers among African American/blacks were more frequently diagnosed after the cancer had already metastasized and spread to regional or distant sites.<sup>(4)</sup>
- Studies have documented unequal receipt of prompt, high-quality treatment for African American/black women compared to non-Hispanic/Latina white woman.<sup>(5,6)</sup>
- Evidence shows that aggressive tumor characteristics are more common in African American/black women than in non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(7, 8)</sup>

### Patient/Provider Communication

- Prostate cancer is diagnosed at a significantly higher rate in African American/black men than any other race in the world.<sup>(3)</sup>

- In 2009, the most commonly diagnosed cancer in African American/black men was expected to be prostate cancer (34%), followed by cancers of the lung (16%), and of the colon and rectum (10%).<sup>(3)</sup>
- Minority patients with cancer often suffer more pain due to being under-medicated. Nearly 62% of patients at institutions serving predominately African American/black patients were not prescribed adequate analgesics.<sup>(9)</sup>
- In 2003, African American/black women were 2.3 times as likely to have been diagnosed with stomach cancer, and they were 2.2 times more likely to die from stomach cancer, compared to non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(10)</sup>
- African American/black women are usually diagnosed at a higher stage of breast cancer than non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(11)</sup>
- Of all breast cancers diagnosed among African American/black women, 52% are diagnosed at a local stage, compared to 62% among non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(12)</sup>



## Screening

- McAlearney et al. reported African American/black women have lower rates of colorectal cancer screenings compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites due to lack of knowledge, high cost, and fear of screening results.<sup>(13)</sup>
- In 2004, 44% of African American/blacks over 50 years of age reported having a proctoscopic examination within the past five years. Although the rate of colorectal screening tests has improved, the percentage of African American/blacks screened still remains lower than their non-Hispanic/Latino white counterparts.<sup>(14)</sup>
- In 2004, only 59% of African American/black women over 40 years of age reported having had a mammogram.<sup>(14)</sup>
- In 2004, 50% of African American/black men over the age of 50 reported having PSA test and 47% had a digital rectal exam within the past year.<sup>(14)</sup>
- Richert-Boe et al. reported that urologist treatment with curative intent (TCI) to their African American/black patients is higher when compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites (85% versus 92%).<sup>(15)</sup>

## Disparities

- During the period 1960-1962, 42% of African American/black women were overweight, compared with 22% of African American/black men. By 2004, 76% of African American/black adults (20+) were overweight and 35% of the African American/black children were overweight and obese.<sup>(3)</sup>
- In 2005, African American/black high school students were less likely to meet current recommended levels of physical activity than non-Hispanic/Latino white students.<sup>(16)</sup>
- African American/black women, have the highest rates of obesity in the nation, followed by Hispanic women and then non-Hispanic/Latina white women, who have about the same rates as white men.<sup>(17)</sup>
- African American/black patients have been under-represented in oncology clinical trials. It has been reported that 45% of the non-Hispanic/Latino white patients compared to only 31% of African American/black patients were willing to participate in a clinical trial.<sup>(18)</sup>
- Population-based statistics in the United States indicate that overall age-adjusted breast cancer mortality rates are higher among African American/black women than non-Hispanic/Latina white women, and the disparity is increasing.<sup>(19)</sup>

- In 2005, 26.7% of African American/black men and 18% of African American/black women reported that they were current smokers. This prevalence of smoking is considerably higher than the Healthy People 2010 goal of 12%.<sup>(20, 21)</sup>

## Outcomes

- For all cancer sites combined, cancer death rates among African American/blacks are higher than any other racial or ethnic population in the US.<sup>(3)</sup>
- African American/black women diagnosed with breast cancer are less likely than non-Hispanic/Latina white women to survive five years after diagnosis. The breast cancer rate among African American/black women is 77%, compared to 90% among non-Hispanic/Latina whites.<sup>(4)</sup>
- Despite stabilization of rates, cancer mortality among African American/black women is still approximately 17% higher than non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(22)</sup>
- Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among African American/black men with approximately 3,690 deaths expected in 2009.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Mortality rates for oral cancers have not improved appreciably in decades, with African American/blacks less likely than others to survive 5-years post-treatment. Oral cancer is the fifth most common cancer among African American/black males, representing a pressing public health concern.<sup>(23,24)</sup>
- In 2009 the most common cancers among African American/black women were breast cancer (25%), followed by lung (12%), and colon and rectum cancers (11%).<sup>(3)</sup>
- During the period 1996-2002, non-Hispanic/Latino whites experienced higher 5-year relative survival rates for all cancers than African American/blacks, regardless of stage at diagnosis.<sup>(3)</sup>



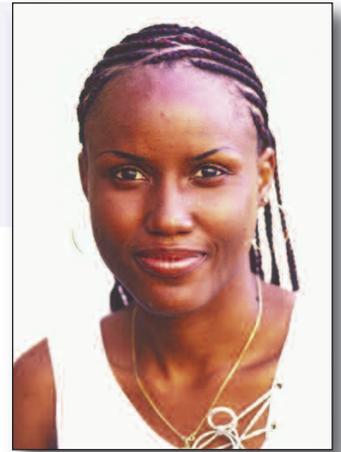
- In 2009 approximately 19,540 new cases of breast cancer were expected among African American/black women while 6,020 were expected to die from this disease.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Despite the stabilization of rates, cancer mortality among African American/black women is still approximately 36% higher than non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Colon and rectum cancer is the third leading cause of cancer death among both African American/black men and women. This group has the highest death rate from colon and rectum cancer of any racial or ethnic group in the US.<sup>(3)</sup>
- According to data for patients diagnosed during 1996-2002, the 5-year relative survival rate from colon and rectum cancer among African American/blacks was 56%, compared to 66% among non-Hispanic/Latino whites.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in African American/blacks, and it is expected to cause 9,820 deaths in men and 7,080 deaths in women in 2009.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Approximately 27,130 newly diagnosed cases of prostate cancer were expected to occur in 2009, accounting for 34% of all cancers diagnosed among African American/black men.<sup>(3)</sup>
- Although prostate cancer incidence rates are high in non-Hispanic/Latino whites, the rate for African American/blacks is 59% higher.<sup>(3)</sup>
- African American/black men were 1.4 times more likely to be diagnosed with lung and prostate cancer than non-Hispanic/Latino white men in 2003.<sup>(10)</sup>
- African American/black men were twice as likely to have new cases of stomach cancer as non-Hispanic/Latino white men.<sup>(10)</sup>
- In 2004, African American/blacks diagnosed with prostate cancer were 2.4 times more likely to die from it compared to non-Hispanic/Latino white men.<sup>(10)</sup>
- African American/blacks have a higher mortality rate of esophageal cancer than non-Hispanic/Latino whites.<sup>(25)</sup> A study examined 1,522 patients with esophageal cancer, African American/blacks had the worst esophageal-specific survival rate compared to non-Hispanic/Latino whites (37% vs. 60% 5-year survival). It was reported that African

American/blacks were more likely to be diagnosed at a more advanced stage and to have squamous cell tumors, but less likely to undergo surgical procedures.<sup>(26)</sup>

- It is estimated that in 2010, more than 24,000 women will die and that 70,480 new cases of colorectal cancer will be diagnosed among women. Colorectal cancer is particularly significant among African American/black women who experience a higher incidence rate (56.1 vs. 46.8 per 100,000) and a higher mortality rate (24.5 vs. 17.1 per 100,000) than non-Hispanic/Latina white women.<sup>(3, 27)</sup>

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