

Closing the Breast Cancer Gap: A Roadmap to Save the Lives of Black Women in America

LOS ANGELES, CA

RACIAL DISPARITY IN BREAST CANCER DEATHS PERVASIVE IN LA AREA

Black Women More Likely To Die From The Disease

In Los Angeles and Orange counties, a racial divide in breast cancer outcomes persists. According to a recent study from Susan G. Komen, both counties report higher late-stage breast cancer rates in Black women than white women, as well as significantly higher mortality rates.

The percentage of women over 40 getting mammograms in Los Angeles County is already lower than state and national averages. But Black women face additional challenges—poor access to high-quality screening and treatment, a lack of transportation and the frequent inability to take time off from work.

Cultural factors also come into play, such as the hesitancy to have conversations about illness and the shame associated with a cancer diagnosis. Racism, microaggressions and health care discrimination fuel distrust in the health care system. Fear of painful procedures and mistreatment is a commonly noted barrier.

“We don’t talk among ourselves. My relatives never shared what illnesses they had. I would never have known that an aunt or whomever had breast cancer or anything else. That was not a topic of discussion, and God forbid they had cancer, the big C. Never”.

- Undiagnosed

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Black women in Los Angeles are screened less often than white women and are more likely to be diagnosed with late-stage breast cancers.
- Patients interested in alternative therapies are not granted coverage for them and are often lost in the continuum of care.
- Lack of trustworthy information, cultural fears, feelings of shame or perception of pain serve as barriers to care.
- Black women also noted that time away from supporting family serves as a barrier to care.
- Fear is a major barrier to screening for breast cancer, including not wanting to discuss cancer.

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