

MEMPHIS, TN

MEMPHIS WORST IN THE COUNTRY FOR RACIAL DISPARITY IN BREAST CANCER DEATHS

New Report Reveals Black Women More Likely To Die From The Disease

A recent in-depth study from Susan G. Komen exposes shocking racial inequities in breast cancer outcomes in the Memphis area. Although local Black women are more likely to get mammograms and have lower diagnosis rates than their white counterparts, those diagnosed are substantially more likely to die from the disease.

Area providers express concern over the quality of screening in Black neighborhoods but the timeliness of screenings may also be a factor. Many who should be screened early, aren't. And procedures are often delayed by financial concerns, poor access to health care, distrust of the system and family responsibilities, resulting in more late-stage diagnoses with higher mortality rates.

Those in treatment can face daunting challenges; study participants described working hourly jobs with no sick leave time and the stress of maintaining a household during chemo and other intense treatments. Public transportation is not widely accessible in the Memphis MTA, yet most health care resources are concentrated in Shelby County. In both Crittenden County and DeSoto County, 100 percent of the population is medically underserved.

“Where I work, I see women getting diagnosed younger, and younger. They say if you have a family history, a first-degree relative, then you should maybe start early, but a lot of people don't know their family history, so how can you know to get somewhere early to detect it?”
- Undiagnosed

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Area providers express concern over the quality of breast cancer screening in Black neighborhoods.
- In the Memphis metropolitan area, the likelihood of receiving a breast cancer diagnosis, the stage of diagnosis and the likelihood of death from the disease vary along geographical and racial lines.
- While free breast cancer screenings exist, they do not exist in areas where younger Black women are, and providers do not know where to refer their uninsured patients.
- Memphis area women note a historic distrust of the health care system and personal experiences of implicit bias, racism and discrimination and lack of understanding or appreciation of life circumstances and responsibilities.

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