

American Cancer Society Calls for Sustained Effort to Reduce Cancer in Ethnic Minorities

National Minority Health Month is an Opportunity to Join the American Cancer Society in Helping to Save Lives from Cancer

(April 15, 2015) – April is National Minority Health Month, and it provides an opportunity to highlight disparities in care while continuing to push for progress toward health equity among ethnic minorities. The American Cancer Society is at work this month and year-round to make cancer education and screenings available to people who have little access to quality healthcare.

Disparities predominantly arise from inequities in work, wealth, education, housing, and overall standard of living, as well as social barriers to high-quality cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment services, according to the [American Cancer Society's Cancer Facts and Figures 2015](#).

“Research shows that ethnic minorities, as well as other medically underserved groups, have higher rates of cancer mortality because many are less likely to be diagnosed early or receive optimal treatment. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons – including access to quality health care – these population groups have not benefited equally from advances in cancer prevention, early detection, and treatment,” said American Cancer Society Chief Medical Officer Dr. Otis Brawley.

Of note:

- People with lower socioeconomic status have disproportionately higher cancer death rates than those with higher socioeconomic status, regardless of demographic factors such as race/ethnicity.
- Disparities in the cancer burden among racial and ethnic minorities largely reflect obstacles to receiving health care services related to cancer prevention, early detection, and high-quality treatment, with poverty as the overriding factor.
- Discrimination is another factor that contributes to racial/ethnic disparities in cancer mortality. Racial and ethnic minorities tend to receive lower-quality health care than whites even when insurance status, age, severity of disease, and health status are comparable.
- Black men and women are more likely to die from cancer than any racial or ethnic group. Compared to Asian/Pacific Islanders, who are least likely to die from cancer, the death rate in blacks is about double. Black men have higher incidence and death rates than non-Hispanic whites for every cancer type except for kidney cancer.
- Hispanics have the lowest rates of tobacco-related cancers, such as lung and oral cavity, because of historically low smoking prevalence, but among the highest rates for cancers associated with infection, such as liver, stomach, and uterine/cervix.
- Cervical cancer incidence rates among Hispanic women are the highest of any racial/ethnic group, 50% higher than those among non-Hispanic whites.

- Compared to other racial/ethnic groups, Asian and Pacific Islanders have the lowest overall cancer incidence and mortality rates. However, similar to Hispanics, this population has among the highest rates for cancers of the liver and stomach.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives have the highest kidney cancer incidence and death rates of any racial or ethnic population.

For those who bear the brunt of this unequal cancer burden, getting potentially lifesaving screening tests can be difficult, if not impossible. Because of strong collaboration with partnering organizations, the American Cancer Society and ACS CAN are able to reach these critical populations and help save more lives.

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About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a global grassroots force of 2.5 million volunteers saving lives and fighting for every birthday threatened by every cancer in every community. As the largest voluntary health organization, the Society's efforts have contributed to a 22 percent decline in cancer death rates in the US during the past two decades, and a 50 percent drop in smoking rates. Thanks in part to our progress nearly 14.5 million Americans who have had cancer and countless more who have avoided it will celebrate more birthdays this year. We're determined to finish the fight against cancer. As the nation's largest private, not-for-profit investor in cancer research, we're finding cures and ensuring people facing cancer have the help they need and continuing the fight for access to quality health care, lifesaving screenings, clean air, and more. For more information, to get help, or to join the fight, visit cancer.org or call us anytime, day or night, at 1-800-227-2345.
