

Studies: Med disparities by race persist

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Racial minorities are less likely than whites to have major surgeries at the hospitals where those operations are performed best, a U.S. study said Wednesday.

African-American patients using Medicare HMOs also fared worse than whites on several health measures regardless of their healthcare plan quality, a second study said.

The studies, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, add to the evidence the U.S. healthcare system serves minorities less well than whites despite years trying to erase racial inequalities, The Washington Post reports.

University of California, Los Angeles, medical researchers found blacks, Hispanics and Asians were more likely to have operations at low-volume hospitals, where mortality rates are generally higher, than at high-volume hospitals that excel in the surgeries.

The racial disparities remained even after accounting for income, age and how close a person lived to high- and low-volume hospitals.

A Brown University study found blacks did worse than whites in controlling healthy blood and cholesterol levels despite Medicare HMO quality improvements.

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