

Research finds racial, ethnic disparities in health care among older male cancer survivors

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Older African-American and Hispanic men who have survived cancer are less likely than their white counterparts to see a specialist or receive basic preventive care, such as vaccinations, according to new research from Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center.

Researchers examined racial/[ethnic disparities](#) in health care receipt among a nationally representative sample of male [cancer survivors](#). They found that disparities are evident among older, but not younger, cancer survivors, despite their access to Medicare.

Lead author Nynikka Palmer, Dr.P.H., a [postdoctoral fellow](#) at Wake Forest Baptist, said they identified 2,714 men 18 and older from the 2006-2010 National Health Interview Survey who reported a history of cancer. The researchers looked at health care receipt in four self-reported measures: primary care visit, specialist visit, flu vaccination and pneumonia vaccination.

"Overall, our results suggest that older minority male cancer survivors may need specific support to ensure they receive necessary post-treatment care," Palmer said.

The study was recently published online ahead of print in the *American Journal of Public Health*.

Even when the researchers adjusted for factors that contribute to disparities, such as education and health insurance, they found that African American and Hispanic male cancer survivors 65 years and older may not be receiving appropriate follow-up care and preventive care. Palmer said this is a concern "because regular follow-up care is important to monitor for recurrence, new cancers, and late and long-term effects of cancer and its treatment, particularly for those with more co-morbidities."

Overall, among older survivors, approximately 39 percent of African-Americans and 42 percent of Hispanics did not see a specialist, compared with 26 percent of older non-Hispanic whites. Likewise, about 40 percent of African-American and Hispanic cancer survivors did not receive the [flu vaccination](#), compared with 22 percent of non-Hispanic white cancer survivors.

Similarly, 51 percent of African-Americans and 59 percent of Hispanic cancer survivors did not report receiving the pneumonia vaccine, compared with 29 percent of non-Hispanic whites.

"These findings are consistent with other reports of health care use among cancer survivors and suggest there may be differences in types of Medicare health plans, supplemental insurance and out-of-pocket costs among older survivors that could be contributing to this disparity," Palmer said.

Palmer said further study is needed to identify other factors that may influence racial/ethnic disparities among male survivors, such as patients' beliefs about care after cancer and patient-provider communication.

Provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center

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