

# Why are black men missing from prostate cancer research?

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Black men are three times more likely to develop prostate cancer than other demographics, yet black men are consistently underrepresented in research studies, say researchers from King's College London in a new paper published in *ecancermedicalscience*.

The problem? Healthcare research conducted in one demographic often doesn't translate to results for other demographics, and recruitment of ethnic minorities often fails to meet a balance.

For example, in 2015, [researchers](#) realised that the HPV vaccines being given in the United States of America were less effective in African American women. The vaccines were developed for strains of the virus more commonly found in white women, on whom the clinical trials had been based.

Now, researchers warn that black men may not benefit from current research studies on prostate cancer.

"It's important that future research be generalizable," says study author Dr Mieke Van Hemelrijck of King's College London, London, UK. She explains that if black men don't participate in research studies, their unique needs and experiences will be missing from the conclusions.

To find out why this community is less likely to participate in research recruitment, the researchers surveyed the opinions and attitudes of sixteen black men undergoing treatment for prostate cancer in London.

"We uncovered a number of barriers to the recruitment of black men with prostate cancer into research studies," says Dr Van Hemelrijck.

These include mistrust of researchers and their motives, lack of understanding about the benefits and consequences of participating, and even a feeling in immigrant communities that traditional medicines and coping methods are more reliable.

So how can research studies on prostate cancer become more inclusive for [black men](#)?

The researchers suggest that community-driven engagement may be the way forward, as well as dissemination of reliable information.

Hearing from black male survivors of [prostate cancer](#) may improve screening uptake as well as participation in research.

"There was mention of a mechanic who offered a free MOT to every black man who had received a prostate check at their GP surgery," says lead author Dr Charlotte Toms of King's College London, London, UK.

"When asked "do you think it helps the fact that he was a [black man](#), who had been through it himself? And then he was then trying to engage people to come in?" An individual responded, "yes, yes. That helped.""

**More information:** Charlotte Toms et al. Research engagement among black men with prostate cancer, *ecancermedicalscience* (2016). [DOI: 10.3332/ecancer.2016.695](https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2016.695)

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