

Oncologist discusses health disparities in gynecologic cancers

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Intermediate magnification micrograph of a low malignant potential (LMP) mucinous ovarian tumour. H&E stain. The micrograph shows: Simple mucinous epithelium (right) and mucinous epithelium that pseudo-stratifies (left - diagnostic of a LMP tumour). Epithelium in a frond-like architecture is seen at the top of image. Credit: Nephron /Wikipedia. CC BY-SA 3.0

Each year, thousands of women are diagnosed with gynecologic cancers in the U.S. While cervical, ovarian and uterine cancer affects all races, Black women are often diagnosed at later stages and are more likely to

die from these diseases.

Dr. Kristina Butler, a Mayo Clinic gynecologic oncologist, discusses [health disparities](#) and prevention.

Gynecologic cancers target the female reproductive system. This includes cancer of the ovaries, fallopian tubes, uterus, cervix, vulva and vagina. About 100,000 women are diagnosed yearly. However, outcomes are different for minority women.

"We do see, unfortunately, elevated mortality rates in Black and Hispanic women in gynecologic cancer," says Dr. Butler.

She says there are several socioeconomic factors that play a role in gynecologic cancer disparities. Obesity, diabetes and hypertension also contribute to cancer risks.

"I think that the health care disparities involve comorbidities of these patients, access for these patients, transportation," says Dr. Butler.

She says finding a health care professional you're comfortable with, getting vaccinated against HPV, and undergoing regular pelvic exams and/or Pap tests are crucial.

"This is tremendously important because catching and screening these abnormalities and cancers early improves long-term outcomes for women," explains Dr. Butler.

Gynecologic cancer symptoms:

- Vaginal bleeding.
- Abnormal discharge.
- Pelvic pain or pressure is common for ovarian and uterine

cancers.

- Itching, burning, pain, or tenderness of the vulva.

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