

# Words about Wellness

UNC DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

## A Quick Glance at Cancer Disparities

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October 2020 "Words About Wellness" is brought to you by:

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**Possible causes for cancer disparities:**

There are several factors that contribute to cancer disparities: race, environmental exposures, and healthcare access, just to name a few.

**For instance:**

- **Genetics:** Family history of cancer
- **Healthcare access:** No healthcare access could mean no early diagnosis and no access to education, screenings, and treatments
- **Socioeconomic factors:** living in rural areas - no medical coverage, no access to healthcare clinics, and transportation barriers
- **Environmental factors:** Exposure to chemicals via the water, powerplants, etc.
- **Diet/Exercise:** Smoking, unhealthy eating/drinking habits, and physical inactivity

**Statistics:** National Cancer Institute: ([www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities](http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities))

- Black women are more likely to be diagnosed with Breast Cancer and more likely to die from it than any other ethnicity groups
- American Indians/Alaska Natives are more likely to be diagnosed from kidney and liver cancers.
- Black men are twice as likely to die from prostate cancer than White men
- Women in rural areas are more likely to die from cervical cancer than those in urban areas.
- Black people are twice as likely to be diagnosed and die from multiple myeloma than White people.

**What can/has been done:** National Cancer Institute: ([www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities](http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities))

There have been some actions taken to minimize these disparities. For instance – Delaware created a program to provide free screenings and treatments for colorectal cancer.

Researchers aim to increase diversity (specifically, racial/ethnic minorities) in clinical trials to collect applicable data for minority populations. For example, this could help inform us of why Black men have a higher risk for prostate cancer or learn about other biological differences across ethnic groups.

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## **What you can do:**

It is of utmost importance to care for our bodies. To treat them as if they are our only mode of transportation. Be more active, eat healthier, find ways to destress, and have positive influences in your life. Just working on one of these areas is better than not working on any.

Follow the recommended guidelines for important health screenings, schedule and attend regular healthcare visits, be open and honest with your healthcare providers, ask questions, educate yourself, and be your own advocate. Again, Be Your Own Advocate!

## **References:**

- National Cancer Institute: ([www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities](http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/understanding/disparities))

## **Additional resources to consider:**

- Article: "Health Disparities and Cancer: Racial Disparities in Cancer Mortality in the United States, 2000–2010" (doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2015.00051)
- Cancer Health Disparities: <https://youtu.be/XSDU3d2j4gY>
- Article: "Socioeconomic and Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Cancer Mortality, Incidence, and Survival in the United States, 1950–2014: Over Six Decades of Changing Patterns and Widening Inequalities" (doi: 10.1155/2017/2819372)