

Closing the Breast Cancer Gap: A Roadmap to Save the Lives of Black Women in America

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BREAST CANCER DISCRIMINATES

Area Black Women More Likely To Die From Disease

Although Black women in the Tidewater metropolitan area are less likely to get diagnosed with breast cancer than their white counterparts, those who do are substantially more likely to die of the disease, says a new report from Susan G. Komen.

Additional study is needed to fully understand the reasons for the inequity, yet disparities exist across at least half of the cities in the Tidewater MTA, with Suffolk and Chesapeake standing out for having the widest gap residents across all measures.

The study suggests financial barriers, transportation issues, fear and lack of insurance play a role, causing delays in diagnostic procedures and resulting in late-stage diagnoses with higher mortality rates. Focus group participants also report personal experiences of poor care quality, racism and implicit bias based on economic standing and the type of insurance the patient has. This coupled with general economic vulnerability and food insecurity issues may significantly contribute to the underlying inequities in breast cancer outcomes in the area.

“If you go in on a free screening mammogram and they say you have breast cancer, where do you go from there if you don’t have the insurance? Sometimes, it’s the fear of just knowing you may have it and you don’t have the resources after the diagnosis.”

- Portsmouth Undiagnosed

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- In four out of the MTA’s eight cities/counties for which there was data, Black women experienced lower incidence rates of breast cancer than white women, but higher mortality rates.
- Suffolk City and Chesapeake City experienced the biggest disparities across all measures.
- The stories of Black women, both survivors and undiagnosed, convey their experience of poor-quality care, racism, microaggressions and health care discrimination.

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