

\$25M Grant to Morehouse Researchers Addressing Cancer Disparities

Led by Melissa Davis at historically Black Morehouse School of Medicine, the scientists will also focus on inequities in breast cancer.

March 27, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

A global team of researchers led by Melissa Davis, PhD, of Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) has been awarded a \$25 million [grant](#) through [Cancer Grand Challenges](#) to address [cancer disparities](#) in people of African ancestry.

Located in Atlanta, Morehouse is the first historically Black medical school to receive this grant, which is funded by Cancer Research UK and the National Cancer Institute. This is also the first such award to focus on health disparities in people of African ancestry and to be led by an African-American woman, according to a [Morehouse news release](#).

Davis, the director of the [Institute of Translational Genomic Medicine](#), at the Morehouse School of Medicine, heads Team SAMBAI (Societal, Ancestry, Molecular and Biological Analyses of Inequalities). The team's research proposal focuses on the complex relationship between [genetics](#), environment and social factors in cancer outcomes.

The team's proposal also focuses on [breast cancer](#) among Black women, who, despite having a slightly lower incidence of breast cancer compared with white women, are diagnosed with advanced cancer more frequently and are more likely to have aggressive forms of the disease. For example, Black women are [twice as likely to be diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer](#) compared with women of other races.

"We are looking forward to engaging into what we hope will be groundbreaking research that will shift the paradigm for cancer inequity amongst people of African descent and hopefully helping to save lives in the future," Davis said in the release.

The interdisciplinary team, made up of individuals from the United States, Ghana, South Africa and the United Kingdom, emphasizes the importance of patient partnership and advocacy in addressing cancer disparities.

"Together with our network of visionary partners and research leaders, Cancer Grand Challenges

unites the world's brightest minds across boundaries and disciplines and aims to overcome cancer's toughest problems," said David Scott, PhD, director of Cancer Grand Challenges. "With this investment, our largest to date, we continue to grow our global research community, and fund new teams that have the potential to surface discoveries that could positively impact cancer outcomes."

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