Acute Leukemia Kills Minorities More Often

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While blacks and Latinos represent a fewer number of leukemia cases overall compared with whites, they die from the illness at higher rates, according to research presented at the American Association of Cancer Research Conference on The Science of Cancer Health Disparities and reported by ScienceDaily.

For the study, researchers at the Stanford cancer Institute examined information about cancer incidence, prevalence and survival from the National Cancer Institute's SEER database. Researchers examined data on 40,951 acute leukemia patients during a 10-year period. (There were 2,299 black, 4,4428 Latino, and 22,035 white patients.)

Findings showed that from 1998 to 2008, black patients had a 17 percent increased risk of dying from acute leukemia and Latinos had a 12 percent risk compared with whites.

In addition, when scientists separated the two forms of acute leukemia—acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) and acute myelogenous leukemia (AML)—they found even more pronounced death rate differences between minority patients and their white counterparts.

Black and Latino patients diagnosed with ALL had an increased risk of death (45 percent and 46 percent, respectively) compared with whites. For AML, blacks and Latinos registered an increased risk of death of 12 percent and 6 percent, respectively.

"We don't know the reason for the disparity, but now that we know it exists we can investigate why it occurs," said the study's lead researcher Manali I. Patel, MD, MPH, a postdoctoral fellow in hematology/oncology at the Stanford Cancer Institute. "Like all disparities in cancer there could be any combination of influences; however, we believe that socioeconomic factors and access to care may be playing an important role."

Did you know certain diets can help lower your risk of cancer? Click here to find out more.

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