Death by Violence: Who Lives and Dies in the ER Is Also a Color Issue

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Assault victims who are stabbed, shot or bludgeoned are significantly less likely to leave the emergency room alive if they're black, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Trauma, Injury, Infection and Critical Care* and reported in a University of Massachusetts Amherst press release.

For the study, researchers from that university examined black and white assault cases from 2005 to 2008 involving people at least 15 years old, drawn from the National Trauma Data Bank's representative sample of 100 Level I and II U.S. trauma centers. Of the 137,618 cases sampled, 35 percent were white patients and 65 percent were black. (Of these cases, 46 percent of the white patients sampled identified as uninsured, compared with 60 percent of the black patients.)

Researchers adjusted their findings for the types of weapons used, the severity of victims' injury, their age, the year and any quality-of-care differences at the trauma centers. What scientists found was that more African-American trauma patients died from assault than white patients (about 9 percent compared with 5 percent). In addition, uninsured black patients accounted for 76 percent of all preventable trauma center deaths from assault, researchers said.

"The findings are consistent with previous findings, but it's difficult to identify the causes of these racial disparities," said study author Anthony R. Harris, PhD, an emeritus professor of sociology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Unlike other medical emergencies, when a patient dies as a result of an intentional assault, a double tragedy occurs, Harris added. Why? Because what could just have been an assault becomes a murder, thereby devastating the lives of two or more families who often reside in the same community. In other words, the murderers' lives are also ruined.

But black men who die by violence don't only do so at the hands of others. Did you know that depression-related suicide is the third leading cause of death among young African-American men? Click here to find out more.

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