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Latinos at Greater Risk for Certain Avoidable Cancers

Access to preventive care could reduce the number of Latinos who develop infection-related cancers.

October 1, 2021 By Jeanette L. Pinnace

Overall, Latinos have 25% to 30% lower cancer incidence and mortality compared with the rest of the U.S. population. However, recent study findings published in CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians show that compared with non-Latino whites, Latinos have higher rates of preventable and infection-related cancers, such as breast, cervical, liver, stomach and colorectal cancers, reports NBCNews.com.

For example, Latinos have twice the rate of liver and stomach cancers as their non-Latino white counterparts. And in the 50 states, Latinas have a 32% higher rate of cervical cancer compared with non-Latina white women; in Puerto Rico, the rate is 78% higher. The study authors note that cervical cancer is largely preventable via vaccination and screening, suggesting that these higher rates reflect limited access to health care among this population. Indeed, the researchers pointed out that Latinos have the highest proportion of people without health insurance of any major racial/ethnic group.

For the investigation, scientists from the American Cancer Society (ACS) reviewed data from the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Program of Cancer Registries.

"Addressing this critical gap for Hispanic individuals in obtaining access to high-quality cancer prevention, early detection and treatment is going to be essential for mitigating the predicted growth in the cancer burden," said Kimberly D. Miller, MPH, an ACS researcher and the study's lead author.

"Evidence-based strategies for decreasing the cancer burden among Hispanic individuals include the use of culturally appropriate lay health advisers and patient navigators as well as targeted, community-based intervention programs to facilitate health care access and promote healthy behaviors," wrote the authors.

"Future research should continue to assess not only the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on utilization of cancer prevention and treatment services but also the subsequent impact on cancer

incidence and mortality trends, stage at diagnosis and cancer-related outcomes in the United States among Hispanic individuals and other racial/ethnic groups," concluded the researchers.

To learn more about the early detection of cancer, read, "Oncologists Urge Americans to Get Cancer Screenings Back on Track."

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