Life Is Priceless: Minority Cancer Sufferers Willing to Go Broke to Stay Alive

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Most minorities with cancer would spend all their money on even the harshest care to stay alive, according to a study published in the journal *Cancer* and reported by The Associated Press.

For the study, researchers conducted 4,100 telephone surveys with newly diagnosed lung and colon cancer patients. Of the participants, about 17 percent of colon cancer patients and 31 percent of lung cancer patients were in advanced stages of the disease.

Researchers asked participants if they would risk going broke to get high-cost, aggressive life-extending treatment for as long as possible or if they would prefer less expensive treatment that wouldn't extend their lives. What's more, scientists didn't give participants treatment details, say how long patients might live, or how much care would cost (aggressive cancer treatments are priced at about $100,000).

About 80 percent of African Americans said they were willing to spend everything to lengthen their lives, compared with 72 percent of Asians, 69 percent of Hispanics and 54 percent of whites. (Researchers didn't ask participants why they'd choose to go broke to get treatment.)

These racial differences existed even when researchers accounted for other factors, such as marital and financial status, age, illness severity, time left to live, distrust and faith.

Researchers thought that the distrust factor might cause a higher proportion of minorities to believe doctors would withhold treatment and that these patients might counter this by seeking out more aggressive care options.

In addition, scientists thought faith might prompt participants to seek treatments to prolong their lives (as researchers found in other studies).

Click here to learn five simple colon cancer prevention tips.

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