Experts Discuss the Cancer Divide [VIDEO]

Many factors influence how long people live with cancer, including whether they have access to cancer screening and high-quality treatments.

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If you get cancer, how long you live may depend on factors outside of your control: your race or ethnicity. Where you live. Your age. The type of insurance you have.

Although Californians and Americans overall are living longer with cancer, some communities fare better than others. There are many reasons for this cancer divide. Certain groups may not have regular access to doctors or cancer screening. Smoking and physical inactivity play a role, as does exposure to air pollution.

On Friday, Kaiser Health News senior correspondent Anna Gorman discussed cancer disparities with Kenneth Kizer, MD, MPH, a University of California, Davis, professor. Kizer is the director of the Institute for Population Health Improvement, which works with the state Department of Public Health to manage California's cancer registry.

Survival differs based on race and ethnicity, geography and income, Kizer said during the discussion.

"Overall, as a blanket statement, people who are poor and economically challenged do less well than people who are not in that situation," he said.

Kizer explained that many factors influence how long people live with cancer, including whether they have access to cancer screening and high-quality treatments. Having health insurance increases the odds of getting better care, he said.

"However, it's not that simple, because not all health insurance is the same," he added. "So, the better health insurance you can get the … more likely you'll end up in a place where you can get evidence-based treatment."

To read Gorman's previous coverage about how Californians with cancer are faring, please click here.

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