

Fewer Options for Black Colon Cancer Patients

Some people of African ancestry may be ineligible for targeted therapy.

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Colon cancer patients with African ancestry may have fewer treatment options than those of European descent, according to a genomic profiling study presented at the American Association for Cancer Research annual meeting.

Henry Walch, MS, of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, and colleagues analyzed DNA sequence data from 4,441 people treated for colorectal cancer. The median overall survival time was 45.7 months for people with African ancestry versus 67.1 months for those with European ancestry.

The researchers found that 14% of patients with African ancestry and 20% of those with European ancestry qualified for immunotherapy based on biomarkers such as microsatellite instability and tumor mutation burden. Among those lacking these biomarkers, people of African ancestry were less likely to have tumors with mutations that would make them eligible for targeted therapy.

“The reduced rate of actionable mutations in patients of African ancestry may mean that these patients have fewer options of targeted therapies and immunotherapies that yield improved outcomes for many colorectal cancer patients,” Walch says.
