Young African American Colorectal Cancer Patients Face Disparity In Genetic Counseling

Despite the need for overall accessibility, ethnic and racial groups are disparately referred to genetic counseling services

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Colorectal cancer (CRC) incidence has been decreasing among individuals older than 55 years in the U.S., young-onset CRC has shown an opposite trend. From 2000 to 2017, the incidence rates of young adults with CRC have increased, particularly among those aged 40-49 years. Evidence also suggests a discrepancy among racial and ethnic minorities.

The hereditary nature of colon cancer in young adults with CRC makes access to genetic testing vital. Despite the need for overall accessibility, ethnic and racial groups are disparately referred to genetic counseling services. Researchers at UT Southwestern Medical Center and Parkland Health and Hospital System assessed 385 young adults between the ages of 18-49 years old with colorectal adenocarcinoma to measure if:

- Patients were receiving a referral to get a genetic test
- Whether the patient attend the genetic counseling appointment
- Number of patients who were able to complete a genetic test

The study determined that 50% (n=225) of patients with young-onset CRC received a referral for genetic counseling services. However, a smaller portion of African American (n=49) patients were referred to receive genetic counseling as opposed to Hispanic patients (n=116). Many patients either missed their appointment or did not schedule one in the first place. The most common reasons for not receiving the genetic test were the inability to afford the cost, not receiving a referral to genetic counseling services, or the patient not returning their saliva sample.

This article is from the Colon Cancer Foundation. You can read the full article, published on January 25, 2021, on the foundation's website.

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