

# Disparities in Access to Cancer Care



## Overview

Successfully fighting cancer depends on access to timely, high-quality, affordable health care coverage and treatment. Without coverage and treatment, people are less likely to get screened for cancer and are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer at an advanced stage when survival is less likely and the cost of care is higher.

All individuals should have equitable access to quality cancer care and equal opportunity to live a healthy life. Our ability to continue to make progress against cancer relies heavily on eliminating the inequities that exist in cancer care.

## Who is more likely to be uninsured?

Low-income adults in non-Medicaid expansion states are

**1 in 5**

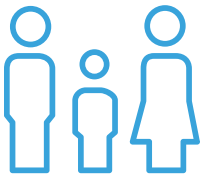
American Indian and Alaska Natives do not have health insurance<sup>1</sup>

**4X**

more likely than low-income adults in Medicaid expansion states to be uninsured<sup>1</sup>

**1/4**

of Hispanic or Latino adults do not have a usual source of medical care, the highest proportion among all racial groups<sup>1</sup>



Individuals of racial/ethnic minority groups are more likely to be uninsured with limited access to care<sup>1</sup>



## How do health outcomes compare across groups?

- Individuals without health insurance are more likely to be diagnosed with advanced cancer and have a higher risk of cancer death compared with those who are insured.<sup>2</sup>
- The overall cancer death rate is approximately 20% higher among residents of the poorest U.S. counties compared with the most affluent.<sup>3</sup>
- The 5-year relative survival rate is lower in Blacks than in Whites for every stage of diagnosis for the four most common cancer sites.<sup>2</sup>
- Blacks have the highest death rate and the lowest survival rate of any racial or ethnic group for most cancers.<sup>2</sup>
- Cancer is the leading cause of death in Hispanic and Asian Americans.<sup>3</sup>
- American Indians/Alaska Natives are one and a half times more likely than Whites to die from their cancer.<sup>3</sup>

# Barriers to Healthcare in Adults

Racial and ethnic disparities in cancer care are largely attributed to obstacles to accessing health care services. These obstacles include, but are not limited to, lack of or inadequate health insurance coverage, low socioeconomic status, lacking a usual source of care, transportation difficulties and health literacy challenges.



**5/10** uninsured female cancer survivors report medication non-adherence due to cost<sup>1</sup>

Urban areas have approximately 5x the number of oncologists compared to rural areas

Rural patients have to travel nearly twice as long one-way as urban and suburban patients in order to see their cancer doctor<sup>4</sup>



**4/10** uninsured male cancer survivors report medication non-adherence due to cost<sup>1</sup>

## ACS CAN is Taking Action

ACS CAN is pursuing evidence-based policies at the local, state and federal levels that aim to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes for all individuals



- Maintaining key provisions of the Affordable Care Act, such as patient protections, that aid lower socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic minorities



- Expanding Medicaid to cover more low-income individuals
- Ensuring cancer patients on Medicaid have adequate access/coverage
- Prevent state waivers from creating unintentional barriers to care for low-income cancer patients and survivors



- Increasing palliative care education, awareness and research via the Palliative Care Hospice Education & Training Act (PCHETA)
- Executing state palliative care task force strategies for rural and ethnic disparities



- Increasing funding for and access to patient navigation programs
- Providing outreach and education to encourage preventive screenings
- Eliminating barriers to compliance with screening and treatment



- Ensuring that qualified health plans provide materials in appropriate languages
- Increasing access to language translation services

1. American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. Cancer Disparities: A Chartbook. Washington, D.C.: American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, Inc., 2018.

2. DeSantis, Carol E., et al. "Cancer Statistics for African Americans, 2019." CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians, vol. 69, issue 3, May/June 2019, pp. 211-233. Wiley Online Library.

3. American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2019. Atlanta: American Cancer Society; 2019.

4. "Cancer Care by Zip Code: Examining Geographic Health Disparities in the United States." ASCO Connection. March 2019.