

Breast Cancer in Latina Women

Important Statistics

- Latinas have a 1 in 11 chance of developing invasive breast cancer in their lifetimes. (American Cancer Society [ACS], 2009).
- Breast cancer is the leading cause of cancer incidence (28 percent of new cancers) and deaths (15 percent) among Latinas. (ACS, 2009).
- Breast cancer is less likely to be found at localized states in Latinas than in white women (55 percent vs. 63 percent) and more at a regional stage (38 percent vs. 30 percent). (ACS, 2009).
- Five-year overall survival rate for Latinas is lower than for NHW women (86 percent vs. 89 percent). (ACS, 2009).
- Breast cancer incidence for Latinas is about 27 percent lower than for white women (90.2/100,000 cases in Latinas vs. 126.9/100,000 in white women). This may be explained by in part by more protective reproductive patterns (lower age at first birth and larger number of children) among Latinas. It may also reflect less use of postmenopausal hormone use and under-diagnosis due to lower utilization of mammography. (ACS, 2009).

Additional Background Information

A recent report examined racial and ethnic disparities in health status and access to care (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009). These disparities point to factors that may contribute to later diagnosis and treatment for breast cancer. When compared to white women, Latinas:

- Are less likely to have health coverage (37 percent vs. 13 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).
- Are less likely to have a personal doctor (37 percent vs. 13 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).
- Have not had a mammogram in the past two years (29 percent vs. 25 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).
- Are more likely to live in poverty (27 percent vs. 12 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).
- Are less likely to have a school diploma (36 percent vs. 7 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).

Limitations of the Data

Health data on Latinas has been difficult to collect in part because there is no standard definition for Hispanic. With no standard definition, classification methods vary including observations by health care providers, using a person's surname or race. Before 1990 people were described in the Census as being of "Spanish origin" rather than the broader definition of Hispanic. The result is misclassification and underreporting of the health issues of Latinas and therefore little information on health trends, with many statistics based on estimates. We know that Hispanics have diverse cultures, countries of origin, socioeconomic status and health status. Perhaps the broadest definition is used in the 2010 Census which labels people Hispanic if they are from Spain, Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America or consider themselves Mexican American, Chicano or Latino.

American Cancer Society. (2009). *Cancer Facts & Figures for Hispanics/Latinos 2009-2011*. Atlanta: American Cancer Society.

Kaiser Family Foundation. (June 2009). *Putting Women's Health Care Disparities on the Map: Examining Racial and Ethnic Disparities at the State Level*. Menlo Park: Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation.