

Breast Cancer in American Indian and Alaska Native Women

Important Statistics

- There were 79.7/100,000 new cases of breast cancer among American Indians/Alaska Native (AI/AN) women in 2006. (Horner, M.J., Ries L.A., Krapcho, M., Neyman N., Aminou R. et al., 2009).
- Breast cancer mortality was 15.7/100,000 among AI/AN women in 2006. (Horner, M.J. et al., 2009).
- AI/AN women are less likely to have had a mammogram in the past two years (34 percent vs. 25 percent). (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2009).
- Twice as many AI/AN women report never having a clinical breast examination compared to white women (11 percent vs. 5 percent). (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002-2007).
- AI/AN women have a higher risk of a late stage (Stage III and IV) diagnosis of breast cancer compared to Non-Hispanic White (NHW) women. Differences in treatments received by ethnicity and race are likely to result from socioeconomic and cultural factors, which have implications for screening and treatment programs targeting women of certain ethnic groups and low socioeconomic groups. (Li, C.I., Malone K.E., Daling, J.R., 2003).

Additional Background Information

A 2007 compilation of cancer information reported that AI/AN women have less favorable socioeconomic status and health care access compared to NHW women, contributing to lower rates of screening and breast cancer incidence rates, but higher late-stage diagnosis rates. (Espey, D.K., Wu, X.C., Swan, J., Wiggins, C., Jim, M.A. et al., 2007). Consistent with this, a recent report examining racial and ethnic disparities in health status and access to care found that when compared to white women, AI/AN women:

- Were less likely to have health coverage (34 percent for AI/AN women vs. 13 percent for white women). (Kaiser, 2009).
- Were less likely to have a personal doctor (21 percent vs. 13 percent) or a routine checkup in the past two years (19 percent vs. 17 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).
- Were more likely to live in poverty (33 percent vs. 12 percent) and live in single parent households (33 percent vs. 17 percent). (Kaiser, 2009).

Data Limitations

- Compiling breast cancer statistics on AI/AN populations is challenging because of their ethnic and geographic diversity, incomplete data and the many locations in which they may receive services.
- The population of AI/AN, including those of more than one race, is estimated at 4.9 million, making up 1.6 percent of the total population as of July 1, 2008. A high proportion of AI/AN report more than one race (36 percent for AI/AN persons compared to 2 percent for whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) which increases the likelihood of misclassification.
- There were 562 federally recognized tribes. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009).

- Many statistics are reported for the geographic area in which services are provided at the expense of the Indian Health Service, rather than all locations from which women may receive screening or treatment services (American Cancer Society, 2009) which may mean that many AI/AN women are diagnosed or treated but not reported.

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Espey, D.K., Wu, X.C., Swan, J., Wiggins, & C, Jim, M.A. et al. (2007). *Annual Report to the Nation on the Status of Cancer, 1975-2004, Featuring Cancer in American Indians and Alaska Natives*, *Cancer*, 110 (10), 2119-2152.

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Li C.I., Malone K.E., & Daling J.R. (2003, January). *Differences in breast cancer stage, treatment, and survival by race and ethnicity*. *Archives of Internal Medicine* 163 (1), 49-56.

U.S. Census Bureau (2009, November). *Facts for Features: American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month*.