

Does Race, Ethnicity, or Gender Matter in Health Care?

It all depends on you.

Our effectiveness as health care providers is increased by being attuned to when these factors impact the care we provide.

Given our increased ability to use technology to analyze multiple factors we are learning to tease out the intricacies of race, ethnicity, and gender in the research that drives our standards of care.

Each person's health profile reflects a combination of biology, heritage, habits, experiences, and the impact of social factors. Some of these change the expression of genetic factors, others increase the risk of certain conditions, and still others are protective.

Aggregated data provide a framework for the care and treatment we provide. But it has its limits. For example, use of the term 'minority' is not helpful as each group of people, including non-Hispanic whites, includes a variety of heritages.

While aggregated data provide valuable knowledge, it is the individual nuances of the patient in front of us that should drive clinical judgment. Looking at each person as an individual within a broader context is the refinement of the lessons learned from case studies.

Science and clinical research are providing an opportunity for us to recalibrate what we do based on what we now know and what we hope to discover. Our challenge is to be open to new clinical interventions to help achieve the best health for all.

Consider this:

- For Asian-Americans and Hispanics, cancer is the leading cause of death.¹
- Among Hispanic women the leading cause of cancer death is breast cancer and among Hispanic men it is lung cancer.²
- Black and Hispanic women have higher rates of cervical cancer than non-Hispanic White women³ highlighting the importance of regular Pap screening.
- Top cancer sites for Hispanic and Asian men and women (2014-2018) are liver and intrahepatic bile duct and stomach.⁴
- Hispanics have two-fold higher rates of liver and stomach cancers than non-Hispanic Whites.⁵ Data shows that 1 in 5 people with liver cancer in the United States is Hispanic.⁶
- Hispanic smokers who visit a provider are 51% less likely to receive advice to quit smoking than non-Hispanic White adult smokers.⁷
- In 2020 the American Cancer Society updated its cervical cancer screening recommendations to prioritize HPV testing even though the limitations state "There is disparity in the cervical cancer disease burden in the United States, with higher rates of disease among Black and Hispanic women and women of lower socioeconomic status: populations not optimally represented in the RCTs [randomized controlled trials]."⁸
- Hispanics are more likely to be diagnosed with advanced stages of disease, have longer times to definitive diagnosis and treatment initiation, and experience poorer quality of life relative to non-Hispanic Whites.⁹

¹Heron M. Deaths: Leading causes for 2019. National Vital Statistics Reports; vol 70 no 9. Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2021. ²American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures for Hispanic/Latino People 2021-2023. Atlanta: American Cancer Society, Inc. 2021. ³American Cancer Society. <https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/#!/cancer-site/Cervix?module=g4elyv7V>: "Source: NCI 2021. Seer Cancer Statistics Review, 1975-2018. Table 1.25 and SEER*Explorer [Accessed 7/22/2021]. ⁴Miller KD, Ortiz AP, Pinheiro PS, Bandi P, Minihan A, Fuchs HE, Tyson DM, Tortolero-Luna G, Fedewa SA, Jemal AM, Siegel RL. Cancer Statistics for the US Hispanic/Latino Population, 2021. CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians. doi: 10.3322/caac.21695. ⁵Robinson, A., Ohri, A., Liu, B., Bhuket, T., & Wong, R. J. (2018). One in five hepatocellular carcinoma patients in the United States are Hispanic while less than 40% were eligible for liver transplantation. World journal of hepatology, 10(12), 956-965. ⁶Stephen Babb, MPH; Ann Malarcher, PhD; Kat Asman, MSPH; Michelle Johns, MA, MPH; Ralph Caraballo, PhD, MPH; Brenna VanFrank, MD, MSPH; Bridgette Garrett, PhD. Disparities in Cessation Behaviors Between Hispanic and Non-Hispanic White Adult Cigarette Smokers in the United States, 2000-2015. Prev Chronic Dis. 2020;17(1):e10. ⁷Fontham, ETH, Wolf, AMD, Church, TR, Etzioni, R, Flowers, CR, Herzig, A, Guerra, CE, Oeffinger, KC, Shih, Y-CT, Walter, LC, Kim, JJ, Andrews, KS, DeSantis, CE, Fedewa, SA, Manassaram-Baptiste, D, Saslow, D, Wender, RC, Smith, RA. Cervical cancer screening for individuals at average risk: 2020 guideline update from the American Cancer Society. CA Cancer J Clin. 2020; 70: 321- 346. ⁸Yanez B, McGinty HL, Buitrago D, Ramirez AG, Penedo FJ. Cancer Outcomes in Hispanics/Latinos in the United States: An Integrative Review and Conceptual Model of Determinants of Health. J Lat Psychol. 2016 May;4(2):114-129.



Healthy Americas Foundation
1501 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
healthyamericasfund.org