

# CANCER WELLNESS for African Americans



# AFRICAN AMERICANS & THE CANCER EXPERIENCE

The cancer continuum of care is a way of referring to the different stages of care a patient may encounter in relation to a cancer diagnosis. African Americans often face social and economic barriers that interrupt this continuum, leading to higher prevalence and worse outcomes than other groups. Regarding cancer, the stages of the continuum of care are as follows:

## Prevention

Awareness and education about healthy lifestyle choices—such as the elimination of smoking cigars or cigarettes—can help prevent some cancers.

## Detection & Diagnosis

Getting screenings regularly increases the chance to identify the cancer and intervene earlier which helps increase the chances of recovery with minimal side effects.

## Promptly Receiving Treatment

Adherence to the prescribed treatment helps reduce disease progression, frequency of time in the hospital, and mortality. It can be affected by lack of access to reliable transportation or strained financial resources needed for co-pays, gas, and parking.

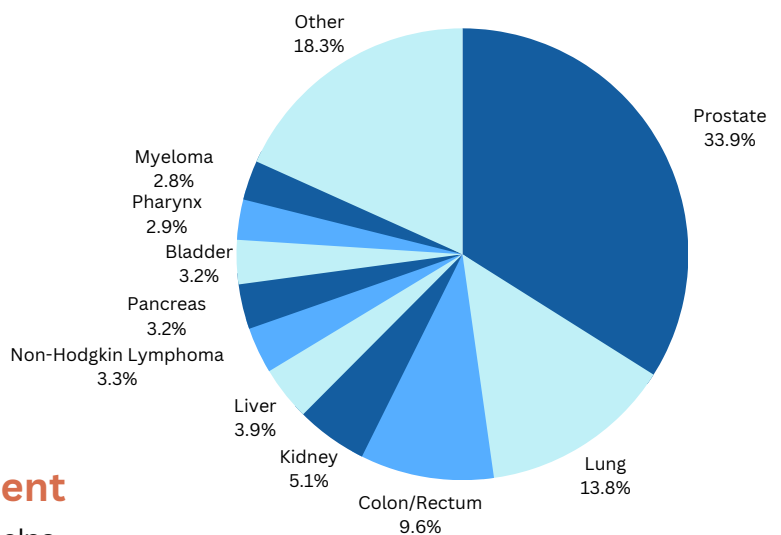
## Survivorship

Coping with the impact of the illness and making any needed lifestyle changes.

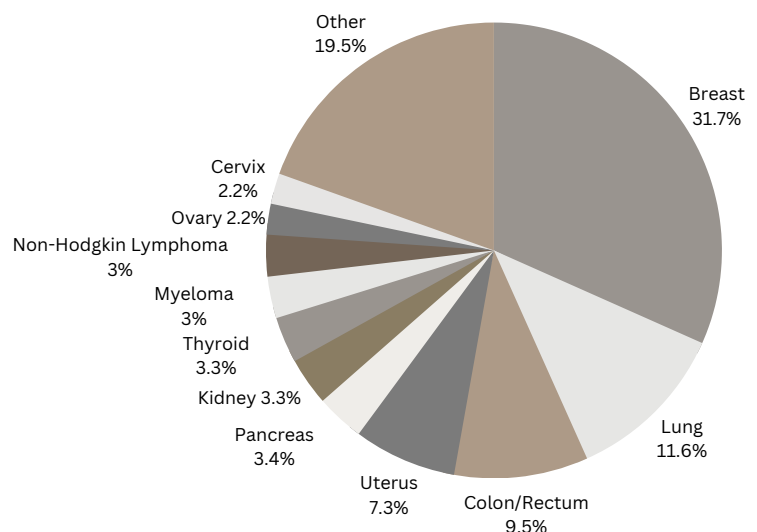
## End of Life

Involves symptom management in the late stages of an advanced illness via palliative care. Comfort and quality of life are emphasized.

Cancer Prevalence Among African American Men  
(CDC 2016)



Cancer Prevalence Among African American Women  
(CDC 2016)



# RACE & HEALTHCARE



A cancer diagnosis usually leads to increased interaction between the patient, medical professionals, and healthcare institutions. For African Americans, existing racial disparities and insensitivity in the U.S. healthcare system can result in anxiety around advocating for health needs.

Implicit racial bias by healthcare providers can lead to black patients receiving substandard care when providers wrongly attribute negative traits to them. In such instances black patients may be accused of faking symptoms, exaggerating the extent of symptoms, and being angry or hostile—when in reality they are communicating their needs, concerns, and the desire for more or clearer information.

These biases can also affect doctors' communication with patients in less obvious ways. In other words, whether they realize it or not, some doctors may not ask their Black patients questions or invite input from them. Some patients are hesitant to speak about their concerns due to worry that they will be labeled a 'difficult' patient, but self-advocating is worth the effort.

Benefits to patients engaging in self-advocacy include: being more likely to feel their treatment lines up with their personal preferences, needs, and values; being able to nip potentially urgent issues in the bud by bringing them up when they're merely bothersome; getting better control of symptoms such as fatigue and pain; possibly being able to ease the financial burden of living with a chronic illness.

Certainly it shouldn't be up to individual people within marginalized communities to fight racism in medicine—the health care community has a responsibility to enact serious reform so people of all identities receive equal treatment. But in the meantime, there may be a few things in a patient's personal control to try to ensure that are getting the best care possible after a cancer diagnosis.

# How To SELF-ADVOCATE



- Your doctor spent many years mastering a specific field of study and they know a lot, but they don't know your body or your history as well as you do. Your relationship with your doctor should be open, honest, and trusting. You should feel you can talk about anything with the doctor, even sensitive subjects like sex or the price of tests or treatments. The doctor should be sure that you understand and feel comfortable with health decisions. They should listen to any concerns and answer your questions.

- If needed, ask for accommodations before your appointment. Tell your healthcare provider what you need from them and ask them to jot down your requests in your chart before you come in. For example: "I'm in recovery, so please don't give me any narcotic painkillers." or "I have PTSD from sexual trauma, so please let me know if you are going to touch me and talk me through whatever procedures you're going to do."



- Let doctors know if you disagree with something they think you should do. It gives them the opportunity to either change the plan because they understand the reasons it might not be right for you, or to explain why they think that plan is actually a good one. Remember that although you are both working toward the same goal you can speak up if you don't feel comfortable with how that goal is being met.

- Journal your symptoms. This can help doctors identify patterns of clues. And having it with you can be helpful if you're in a situation where your doctor is dismissing your symptoms- which can make it easy to get flustered and blank on specific concerns.



- Arm yourself with information. Trustworthy sources (like .gov, .org, and .edu sites) can help you figure out what might be going on and which questions to ask at your appointment. Write down those questions to take with you. Then, if your doctor comes up with a conclusion that doesn't make sense to you, you can ask them to clarify why they believe what they do, request tests to rule out other possibilities, or ask about other treatment options.

- Importantly, self-advocacy doesn't mean you have to go it alone. Having someone in the doctor's office with you can help guarantee all your questions are answered and may also bring a fresh perspective to the conversation. If you do not have someone who can be there with you, connecting with community groups helps with feeling less alone and overwhelmed.

# Receiving **SUPPORT**



Going through cancer is a journey best traveled with other people we can turn to for understanding and assistance. Support may come from our biological families, chosen families, friendship groups, and/or spaces tailored specifically for cancer patients. Below are some areas of life that could be impacted by a cancer diagnosis where some form of support may be needed.



- 
- Making adjustments to family and community member responsibilities/roles.
  - Discovering different ways to socialize with friends and loved ones.
  - Reduced ability to work/needing resources to provide financially for self/others.
  - Participation in physical activities (playing sports, working out, physical intimacy, hobbies)
  - Questions around meaning- life, spirituality, religion.
  - Perceptions of self-image/Gender expression.
  - Mood changes that commonly occur with a wide range of fluctuating emotions.

# Online RESOURCES

## The Prostate Health Education Network (PHEN)

PHEN is a national organization that was founded to address African American prostate cancer disparities. PHEN programs and initiatives include: Patient education and awareness webcasts and webinars; Clinical Trials Rally; Church Partnerships; Daddy's Boys Stage-play and films; and Annual African American Prostate Cancer Disparity Summit.

- Detection & Treatment Pathways: <https://phenpsa.com/>
- Recorded Webinars: <https://phentv.com>

## TOUCH, The Black Breast Cancer Alliance

TOUCH, BBCA is a collaborative coalition working collectively towards the common goal of eradicating Black Breast Cancer. They produce a relatable, reliable black breast cancer web series "The Doctor is In" which premieres every Wednesday at 6pm EST on Facebook/BlackDoctor.org; their "When We Tri(al)" initiative seeks to increase black women's participation and understanding of clinical research trials that study breast cancer drugs and treatments which result in increased understanding of the physiology of Black women.



---

## Virtual Support Groups

### EMORY UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL MIDTOWN'S AFRICAN AMERICANS WITH CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

RSVP REQUIRED- Meets virtually via Zoom on second Tuesday of each month, 2:00pm-3:00pm  
Facilitator: Russell Brown, LCSW and Nikita Burke, LMSW  
RSVP to [russell.h.brown@emoryhealthcare.org](mailto:russell.h.brown@emoryhealthcare.org) or (404) 686-5191 | [nikita.burke@emoryhealthcare.org](mailto:nikita.burke@emoryhealthcare.org) or (404) 501-3742

### ZERO's BLACK MEN'S PROSTATE CANCER INITIATIVE SUPPORT GROUP

This group provides prostate cancer education resources and support specifically for Black men diagnosed with prostate cancer. It is led by two licensed mental health professionals. The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Monday each month at 8pm EST via Zoom.

Website to sign up: <https://zerocancer.org/get-support/black-mens-prostate-cancer-initiative/>



# About US

## The Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support

At The Loran Smith Center for Cancer Support we recognize that cancer treatment involves more than medical care. We serve as a resource for patients before, during, and after cancer treatment. Our center provides guidance, education, emotional support, and spiritual support to cancer patients and their families in north Georgia free of charge.



---

## Services We Provide

Illness Adjustment Counseling  
Men's Cancer Support Group (Any Diagnosis)  
Breast Cancer Support Groups  
Women's Cancer Support Group (Any Diagnosis)  
Caregivers Support Group  
Healing Touch (by appointment)  
Resource Library  
Tai Chi Chih  
Mindfulness Practice Group, Zoom Class  
Grief Support  
Nutritional Counseling (by appointment)  
Yoga

For more information about the LSCCS programs or to register for a class, please email [loransmithcenter@piedmont.org](mailto:loransmithcenter@piedmont.org) or call **706.475.4900**

## *Contact*

240 Talmadge Drive Athens, GA 30606  
706-475-4900

