



African American Health Disparities Fact Sheet

The Case for Covered California

According to the Journal of Public Health, more than 886,000 deaths could have been prevented from 1991 to 2000 if African Americans had received the same care as whites. While African Americans do have greater incidence of some diseases, the challenge remains to deliver the same high quality health care to everyone, despite reduced access to health care for African Americans. Clearly, Covered California plays a key role in better health care for African Americans going forward.

Consider the following:

- African Americans have the highest mortality rate of any racial or ethnic group for cancer in general, and for most major cancers individually, including stomach, liver, prostate, and colon cancers.
- Heart disease and cancer are the first and second leading causes of death for African American adults 18 years and older in California¹ and nationally².
- Heart disease and cancer combined to account for over half (51%) of deaths among African Americans in California¹ and for nearly half (48%) of all deaths among African Americans nationally³.
- Diabetes was the fourth leading cause of death among African American adults 18 years and older, accounting for 812 deaths in California² and 12,687 deaths nationally during 2002³.
- Although African American adults are 40% more likely to have high blood pressure, they are 18% less likely than their non-Hispanic white counterparts to have their blood pressure under control.
- African Americans are less likely to survive for 5 years after being diagnosed with cancer than whites at all stages of diagnosis. This may be due in part to the fact that cancer factors associated with poverty which include reduced access to medical care; diagnosis at a later stage; when the disease has spread to regional or distant tissue; and disparities in treatment⁴.
- African American adults are less likely than non-Hispanic white adults to have received the flu vaccine in the past year.

- African American adults are twice as likely to be diagnosed with diabetes.
- The infant mortality rate among African Americans is 2.3 times that of non-Hispanic whites, and African American infants are 4 times more likely than non-Hispanic white infants to die due to complications related to low birthweight.

¹ California Health Interview Survey—Ask CHIS 2003. Retrieved June 9, 2005, from <http://www.chis.ucla.edu>

² California Department of Health Services, Center for Health Statistics. (2005) Vital Statistics of California 2002. Retrieved June 9, 2005, from <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/hisp/chs/OHIR/reports/vitalstatisticsocalifornia/vsofca2002.pdf>

³ Anderson RN, Smith BL. (2005). National Vital Statistics Reports: Deaths: Leading Causes for 2002. Retrieved June 9, 2005, from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr53/nvsr53_17.pdf

⁴ American Cancer Society. (2005). Cancer Facts & Figures for African Americans 2005-2006. Retrieved June 9, 2005, from <http://cancer.org/downloads/STT/CAFF2005AAv4PWSecured.pdf>