

HEALTH DISPARITIES

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Health disparities refers to differences in the quality of health care and health outcomes depending on someone's race, ethnicity, age, disability status, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and geographic location.

With the launch of Healthy People 2010, the goal of eliminating health disparities has been placed on the national disease prevention and health promotion priority agenda. Experts have documented that racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes, healthcare access, and quality of care do exist.

Elaine Hart-Brothers, MD, MPH states "there is an inequality and difference in health care that exists, even in this Country." Africans Americans receive less-intensive hospital care, fewer cardiovascular procedures, fewer preventive health screenings, less disease management, fewer medications for HIV/AIDS infections, less aggressive treatment for breast, cervical and prostate cancers, less pain management and less prenatal care.

"Equal care

- 176,633 deaths were averted between 1991 and 2000 by advances in medical treatments.
- 886,202 deaths could potentially have been averted during that time if racial disparities in health care had been eliminated".

There is good news! The good news is that in addition to local and national government initiatives focused on reducing health disparities, we can each **take charge of our health.**

We can each contribute to reducing and ultimately eliminating health care disparities for a healthier African American population.

Strategies to reduce health care disparities include:

Getting regular check ups, preventive screenings and immunizations,

Seeking trustworthy information about illnesses and conditions that affect you,

Become an active partner in your own health care, speak up, voice your opinions and ask questions.

Educating yourself about health and healthcare disparities,

Acknowledging, addressing and raising awareness of this critical issue,

Exploring programs and activities to reduce health disparities, and actively participating in community and government efforts and resources available to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes.

REFERENCES

1. US Department of Health and Human Services. *Healthy People 2010*:
Source: American Journal of Public Health, December 2004