

ACCESS AND STAGE AT DIAGNOSIS OF BREAST CANCER IN AFRICAN AMERICAN AND CAUCASIAN WOMEN

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Purpose: The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship among potential access, realized access, and stage of breast cancer at diagnosis of African American women and Caucasian women receiving care within a public healthcare system. The conceptual framework for this study is based on the Aday/Anderson Framework for the Study of Access which integrates the dimensions of potential and realized access in determining specific stages of breast cancer at time of diagnosis.

Method: This research will use a descriptive-comparative design to replicate a secondary data analysis published by S. Bibb in 2001 with military personnel. The sample for this study will include Caucasian and African American women diagnosed with breast cancer or who received initial breast cancer treatment at a 637 bed, not for-profit hospital in Central Georgia. Data will be collected from a random sample of thirty African American and thirty Caucasian women with breast cancer using the agency's tumor registry. Approval to conduct the study will be obtained from the Institutional Review Board. A list of African American and Caucasian women over the age of eighteen with a first time diagnosis of breast cancer between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2002 will be obtained from the agency's tumor board registry. Records will be reviewed for eligibility for the study, demographic characteristics, diagnosis of breast cancer, stage of cancer, and referral for treatment. The Breast Cancer Medical Record Data Collection Sheet will be used to collect the data. The data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and comparative statistics.

Findings: This study is in progress. Preliminary findings will be available at the end of this year.

Discussion: Breast cancer is the most common cancer among American women. Although the incidence for breast cancer in Caucasian women is higher than African American women, the breast cancer mortality rate is higher for African American women. Differences in the amount of time between discovery of breast cancer, accessing health care, and receiving treatment may contribute to this increased mortality rate. Determining the differences in health promotion behaviors of African American and Caucasian women may provide valuable information for educating women about the importance of discovering and treating breast cancer in a timely manner.