

Health Disparities in the Medicare Population: Prostate Cancer

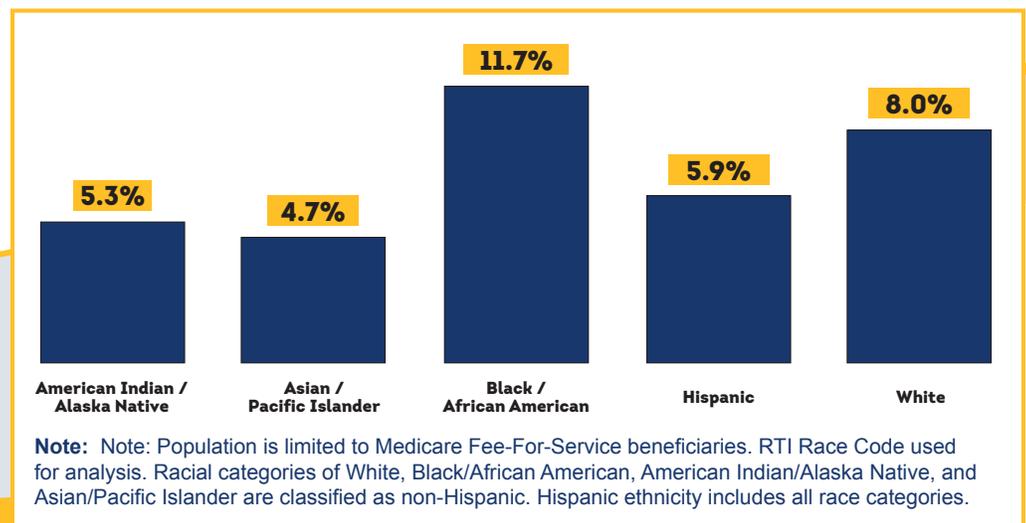
The prostate gland is part of the male reproductive system that produces fluid that forms part of semen. Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control and crowd out healthy cells, making it difficult for the body to function normally. Prostate cancer develops when cells in the prostate grow out of control. Among American males, prostate cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death. Risk factors for prostate cancer include increasing age and having a family history of prostate cancer. Some symptoms for prostate cancer include difficulty urinating, frequent urination, pain in back, hips, or pelvis, and blood in urine or semen. However, not all men experience symptoms from prostate cancer. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 101.6 per 100,000 (or roughly 1 in 1,000) of all men are diagnosed with prostate cancer.¹



In 2014, 6.5% of male Medicare Fee-for-Service beneficiaries had claims with a diagnosis of prostate cancer. Among Medicare beneficiaries, a higher percentage of males 65 years and older (8.0%) than males under the age of 65 (0.9%) had a diagnosis of prostate cancer. As shown in the figure below, the prevalence of prostate cancer among males 65 years and older was highest among Black/African American beneficiaries (11.7%), followed by White (8.0%), Hispanic (5.9%), American Indian/Alaska Native (5.3%), and Asian/Pacific Islander (4.7%) beneficiaries.²

September is **National Prostate Awareness Month**, which focuses on increasing awareness about this chronic disease. It is recommended that males 50 years and older get screened for prostate cancer which is covered by **Medicare**. Medicare provides coverage for two prostate screening procedures, the Digital Rectal Exam (DRE) and the Prostate specific antigen (PSA) test.

Prevalence of Prostate Cancer among Medicare Beneficiaries 65 Years and Older by Race/Ethnicity, 2014



1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dcpc/data/men.htm>
2. Chronic Condition Warehouse (CCW) Medicare enrollment and claims data. <http://www.ccwdata.org>