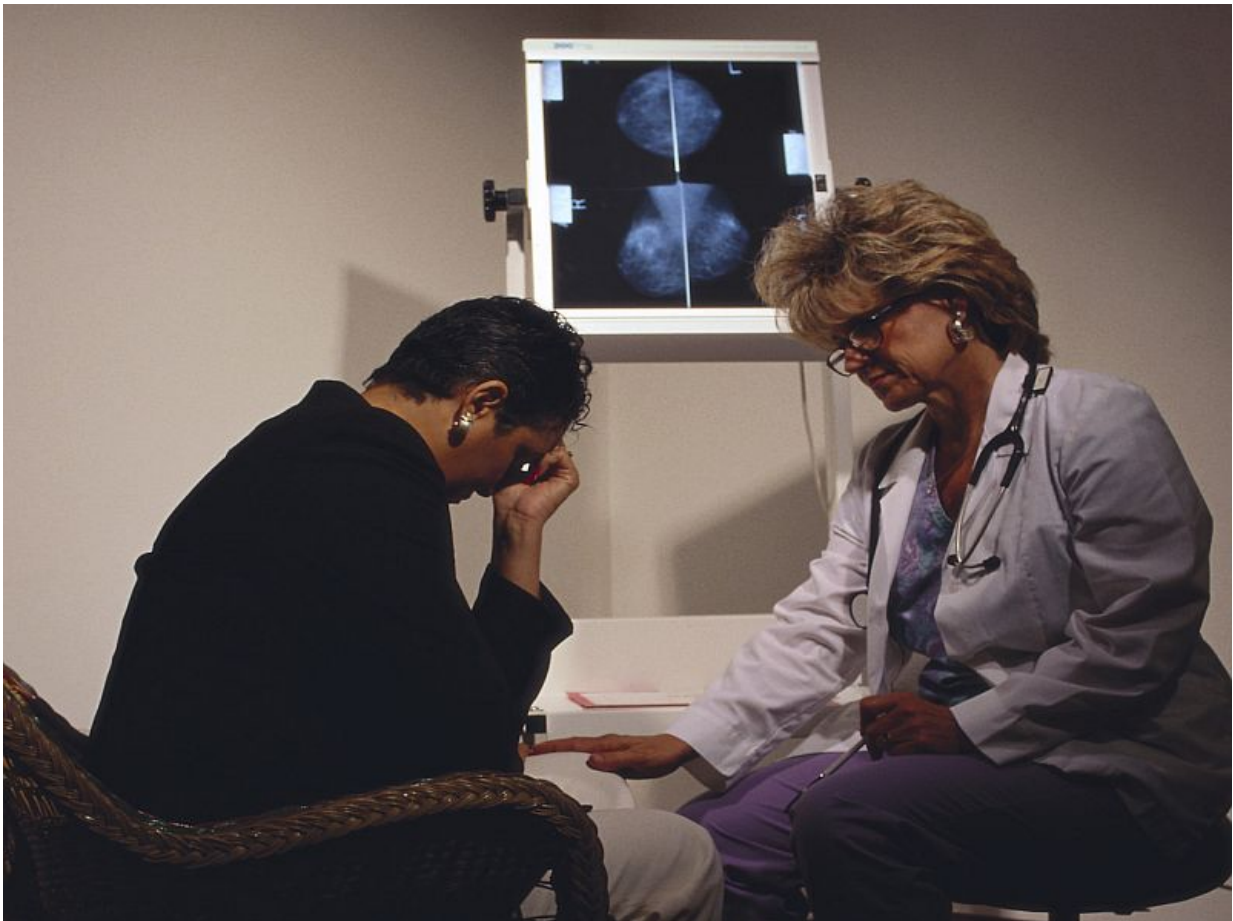


Nonverbal cues may reveal a physician's racial bias

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(HealthDay)—A physician's body language may reveal racial bias against

seriously ill black patients, according to research published in the January issue of the *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*.

The study included 33 hospital-based attending physicians. Black and white actors were asked to portray patients dying from advanced cancer. Their scripts were identical.

The doctors' scores on nonverbal interactions were 7 percent lower when dealing with black patients than with [white patients](#), according to the researchers. "Although we found that physicians said the same things to their black and white patients, communication is not just the spoken word. It also involves [nonverbal cues](#), such as eye contact, body positioning, and touch," senior author Amber Barnato, M.D., M.P.H., an associate professor of clinical and translational medicine at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, said in a university news release.

Physicians need to be aware of their verbal and nonverbal communication, as well as any unintentional biases they may be communicating. Doing so may help [black patients](#) and their families feel welcome and encouraged to be partners in medical decision-making, Barnato explained. "Body language is a significant tool in building trust—or mistrust—and physicians need to ensure that their [body language](#) isn't contributing to that decision," she said.

More information: [Abstract](#)
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