

# African American breast cancer survivor cardiovascular disease risk high but knowledge low

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African American breast cancer survivors are four times more likely to die from breast cancer than women of all other races and ethnicities, and they have a disproportionately high rate of death from cardiovascular disease (CVD).

New research led by George Mason University's College of Health and Human Services faculty Dr. Michelle Williams assessed African American [breast](#) cancer survivors' risk factors and knowledge about CVD in the Deep South, where health disparities between African American women and women of other races is even larger. They found that although African American breast cancer survivors have a higher prevalence of CVD risk factors, their knowledge about CVD is low.

The study was published in the *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice* in February.

Specifically, participants scored low on knowledge about heart attack symptoms and CVD-related

medical information. Participants with healthier diets and higher levels of education had higher levels of CVD knowledge.

"We know that several CVD risk factors, such as hypertension and obesity, can be modified through lifestyle behavior changes," adds Williams. "This is promising, but breast cancer survivors must be better informed about CVD risk by their [health care providers](#)."

Their study included surveys of 70 breast cancer survivors who identified as African American or Black in Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Georgia.

"Our findings highlight the importance of informing African American breast [cancer](#) survivors about their increased risk for co-morbidities such as CVD and providing them with access to culturally appropriate CVD risk reduction interventions aimed at a variety of education levels," explains Williams.

Williams and colleagues are currently conducting the next phase of the study, which will provide more in-depth information about CVD risk factors among African American [breast cancer](#) survivors.

**More information:** Williams, Michelle S. and Anyimukwu, Chizoba. The Association between Cardiovascular Disease Knowledge and Risk Factors among African American Breast Cancer Survivors in the Deep South. *Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice* (2020) Vol. 13 : Iss. 4 , Article 7. Available at: [digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/jhdrp/vol13/iss4/7](https://digitalscholarship.unlv.edu/jhdrp/vol13/iss4/7)

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