Cause of Death Contributions to Black/White differences in mortality 1985-2013

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The Heckler Report

• Report of the Secretary’s Task Force on Black and Minority Health (1985)

• Secretary of Health and Human Services Margaret Heckler

• Developing effective policy requires an accurate description of the problem

• Demonstrating large differences in mortality between black and white populations in the United States
Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health

• There are large and persistent differences in health and survival across racial and ethnic populations in the United States
Life Expectancy at Birth

Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health

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Racial/Ethnic Differences in Health

• There are large and persistent differences in health and survival across racial and ethnic populations in the United States

• Explanations
  • Differences in socioeconomic position – two sided
  • Segregation and neighborhood effects
  • Discrimination
  • Unequal access to health care
  • Intersectionality
An Update is Needed

• How far have we come in terms of reducing disparities in mortality between black and white populations in the United States?

• Which causes of death contribute to the black/white gap in mortality?

• Which causes of death contribute to changes in the black/white gap in mortality over time?
Data

• US Vital Statistics Data 1985-2013
• Multiple Cause-of-Death public-use microdata files
• Age-standardized death rates by cause of death 1985-2013
  • Rankable causes of death ICD9 and ICD10
Analysis

• Contribution of causes of death to black/white mortality gap

• Contribution of causes of death to change in black/white mortality gap
Trends – Men

Source: Multiple Cause of Death Files, NCHS. Estimates may differ slightly from NCHS published results due to correction of mortality for 85+ age group.
Trends – Women

Source: Multiple Cause of Death Files, NCHS. Estimates may differ slightly from NCHS published results due to correction of mortality for 85+ age group.
Cause of Death Contributions – Men

- Perinatal Conditions
- Septicemia
- Hypertension
- HIV
- Nephritis
- Stroke
- Diabetes
- Homicide
- Cancer
- Heart Disease

Percent of black/white mortality gap
Cause of Death Contributions – Women

Percent of black/white mortality gap

-40% 0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100% 120% 140%


Residual
Homicide
Perinatal Conditions
HIV
Septicemia
Hypertension
Stroke
Nephritis
Cancer
Diabetes
Heart Disease
Trends – Men

![Graph showing trends in age-adjusted death rates for Black and White men, with a gap between the two groups. The graph displays data from 1985 to 2013.]
Trends – Men

[Graph showing trends in Age-Adjusted Death Rate for Black, White, and the Gap between them from 1985 to 2013.]
Trends – Women

Age-Adjusted Death Rate

Black

White

Gap

Years: 1985 to 2013
Trends – Women

![Graph showing trends in age-adjusted death rate for women, comparing Black, White, and Gap categories from 1985 to 2013. The graph indicates a decrease in the gap between Black and White death rates over time.]
Contributions to Narrowing Black/White Gap 1995 - 2013

Men

- Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
- Residual
- Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis
- Stroke
- Homicide
- Unintentional Injuries
- Heart Disease
- HIV
- Cancer

Women

- Chronic Lower Respiratory Disease
- Residual
- Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis
- Stroke
- Homicide
- Unintentional Injuries
- Heart Disease
- HIV
- Cancer
Summary of Findings

• The black/white gap in mortality is large and persistent, but has narrowed since 1995

• The largest contributors to this gap among men are heart disease, cancer, and homicide (60%)

• The largest contributors among women are heart disease, diabetes, and cancer (80%)

• Between 1995 and 2013, cancer, HIV, and heart disease were responsible for 57% of the reduction in the black/white gap among men

• They were responsible for 45% of the reduction in the gap among women
The legacy of the Heckler Report

- Highlighting the importance of quality data in research on race/ethnic disparities in health and mortality

- We’ve come a long way, but still have work to do

- Expanding outside the black/white focus

- Identifying shifting threats in racial and ethnic health inequality
Shifting Threats

Diabetes

Hypertension