Blacks and Latinos Have Higher Colon Cancer Risk

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African Americans and Latinos are far more likely thanwhites to develop polyps in the colon that can lead to cancer, according to astudy published in the journal Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics andreported by Columbia University Medical Center.

A polyp in the colon is called a colorectal polyp. It is agrowth along the lining of the colon or rectum and is usually benign, but some canlead to cancer.

For the study, researchers at Columbia University examineddata from more than 5,000 men and women older than 50 who received a first-timecolonoscopy screening at New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Columbia UniversityMedical Center in New York City between 2006 and 2010. None of the studyparticipants had signs or symptoms of colorectal cancer.

Scientists found that doctors detected precancerous polypsin 26 percent of blacks, 22 percent of Latinos and 19 percent of whites. Findingsalso showed that blacks and Latinos were more likely to develop polyps in theupper part of the colon.

“These lesions would have been missed had these patientsundergone sigmoidoscopy, which examines only the lower half of the colon,” saidBenjamin Lebwohl, MD, MS, an assistant professor of clinical medicine andepidemiology at Columbia, and the lead study author. “Therefore, colonoscopy,which examines the entire colon, may be preferable to sigmoidoscopy as ascreening test for blacks and Hispanics.”

These findings are contrary to current statistics that showedminorities have a lower rate of colon cancer than whites.

What this means, Lebwohl said, is that doctors need toredouble their efforts to increase colon cancer screening in areas with largenumbers of racial and ethnic minorities.

Did you know more blacks die of colon cancer than theirwhite counterparts? Click here to learn more.

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