

Black Men's Distrust of Medical System Harms Their Health

African-American men's daily experiences with overt and perceived racism is linked to delays in routine screenings and doctor's visits.

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New findings published in the journal *Behavioral Medicine* reveal that medical mistrust—the deep-seated suspicion of medical organizations—negatively affects Black men's health, reports [UConn Today](#).

For the study, researchers analyzed associations between medical mistrust, perceived racism in health care, everyday racism and preventive health screening delays using data from 610 African-American men age 20 and older.

Results showed that Black men who mistrusted the medical system often postponed routine health visits and blood pressure and cholesterol screenings. Scientists noted that the odds were even higher for those who reported dealing with everyday racism on a more frequent basis. In addition, Black men who perceived racism in health care exhibited higher rates of medical mistrust, which in turn significantly reduced their use of preventive health care.

“Experience with racism in everyday life also appears to chip away at African-American men's health care system trust and utilization,” said Wisdom Powell, PhD, director of the Health Disparities Institute at UConn Health in Connecticut and associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the UConn School of Medicine and the study's lead author. “Thus, to improve African-American men's health and life expectancy, we must also find ways to dismantle structural racism, as doing so is essential to eliminating long-standing health disparities.”

These findings are of great concern especially because Black men have the shortest life expectancy at birth compared with all other population groups in the United States. In addition, Black men are at greater risk for cardiovascular disease, heart attack, stroke and hypertension, among many other conditions, which could be addressed sooner with routine health screenings and early intervention.

“We must address medical mistrust and racism inside and outside of health care institutions to increase lifesaving preventive health screenings among the high-risk population of African American men,” said Powell.

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