

Black Patients Less Likely to Receive Minimally Invasive Heart Surgery

Black patients were 62% more likely to die of heart surgery compared with white patients.

December 22, 2022 By Laura Schmidt

A University of Rochester Medical Center (URMC) study found that newer, minimally invasive procedures, which are less risky and easier to recover from than traditional [heart](#) surgery, are not offered to Black patients as frequently as they are to white patients.

The study, published in [JAMA Network Open](#), found that non-Hispanic Black patients were 35% less likely to have minimally invasive mitral valve [surgery](#) compared with non-Hispanic white patients. What's more, they were 62% more likely to experience serious complications or die.

Traditional heart surgery involves opening the chest and cutting through breastbone, which can often come with a higher risk for complications and a lengthy recovery time.

"We've known for 35 years that historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups tend to have less access to cardiovascular procedures," said lead study author Laurent Glance, MD, professor of anesthesiology and perioperative medicine at URMC, in a [news release](#). "This study highlights the fact that even in 2022, if you're not white, you don't get the same therapies that white people do."

The study analyzed data from nearly 104,000 patients who underwent mitral valve surgery across 1,085 hospitals between 2014 and 2019.

"Minimally invasive surgeries set patients up for the best outcomes," said study coauthor Peter Knight, MD, chief of cardiac surgery at URMC. "That is why the inequities we found in this study are so troubling."

Study authors noted that Black patients were 31 times more likely to receive treatment at hospitals that treat a high proportion of Black patients than at hospitals that serve a lower proportion of Black patients.

Reasons for this inequity include the fact that Black patients are more likely to have Medicaid insurance, to undergo treatment at under-resourced hospitals and to be treated by surgeons with less experience, , according to researchers.

