

Black Patients More Likely to Experience Delay in Appendicitis Diagnosis

However, delayed appendicitis diagnoses among Black patients were less likely in hospitals serving higher rates of minority populations.

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A new Northwestern Medicine study revealed that non-Hispanic Black adults are more likely to experience delays in receiving an appendicitis diagnosis, putting them at a higher risk for perforated, or ruptured, appendicitis as well as post-surgical infections.

However, such delays were seen less frequently in hospitals where more than 50% of patients were Black or Latino compared with those where Blacks and Latinos made up less than 25% of patients, according to a [Northwestern news release](#).

Published in [JAMA Surgery](#), the study looked at data from 80,312 patients ages 18 to 64 from Florida, Maryland, New York and Wisconsin who underwent appendectomy [surgery](#) from 2016 to 2017.

Researchers found that nearly half of patients who experienced delayed diagnosis were eventually diagnosed and treated with surgery for appendicitis at another hospital. This was the first study to find that hospitals serving higher rates of minority populations were less likely to delay diagnosis.

Appendicitis, which affects more than 250,000 people in the United States per year, is the most common surgical diagnosis. Without a prompt diagnosis, the condition can worsen and result in perforated appendicitis, which can lead to an increased hospital stay, post-surgery infections and an increased likelihood that a patient will require a post-surgery return to the hospital.

Previous evidence has shown that minority patients tend to [receive care](#) at lower-quality hospitals that serve a greater number of minority patients.

“Yet, there is clearly a benefit to patients being treated in predominantly minority-serving hospitals when they are having symptoms of appendicitis,” said study senior author Anne Stey, MD, MSc, a surgeon and an assistant professor of surgery at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, in the news release.

“It may be hospitals that are more used to serving racial-ethnic minority patients are better at diagnosing them because they’re more culturally informed and have a better understanding of these patients,” she suggested.

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