

Ensuring Equitable Kidney Care

People of color are more likely to experience kidney failure.

June 27, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

Black Americans are almost three times more likely to experience [kidney failure](#) compared with white people. Although this was once thought to be due to biological differences, research suggests otherwise.

In a recent [Michigan Medicine article](#), Rajiv Saran, MD, a research professor at Michigan Medicine, the University of Michigan's academic medical center, explained: "Initially the greater predilection to kidney disease for certain populations was mainly thought to be due to biological differences, but it is increasingly becoming clear that structural racism is the primary driver of disparities related to social determinants of health that represent the underlying root cause for many of these differences."

Black Americans, Latinos, American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders experience reduced access to kidney care due to a lack of health insurance and are underrepresented on [kidney transplant](#) waiting lists, according to Saran. If left untreated or diagnosed late, kidney disease can lead to complications, including diabetes, obesity, hypertension and other diseases.

What's more, even for people with health insurance, issues such as housing and food insecurity, poverty, unsafe neighborhoods and lack of recreational opportunities also affect whether people can prioritize their health and receive proper medical attention.

"It's a vicious circle. The earlier we can catch people upstream, the better we can prevent downstream consequences of insidiously developing diseases," Saran said.

To ensure more [equitable](#) treatment for kidney disease and other [chronic conditions](#), early detection and awareness are vital. Patients who are diagnosed early have the best chance of slowing the progression of the disease and reducing their risk for complications. According to Saran, by incorporating simple kidney tests into clinical evaluations, providers can get a better idea of which patients ought to be referred to a specialist.

Saran emphasized the need for primary care providers to pay close attention to people of color and patients with kidney disease risk factors, such as cardiovascular disease, hypertension, obesity, diabetes and a family history of kidney disease.

"If you don't detect early, a lot of people will escape the net," Saran said. "It's very important for the primary care community in health care systems to make every effort to detect this condition early."

To learn more, click [#Kidney](#). There, you'll find headlines such as "[Interventions to Reduce Kidney Transplant Disparities](#)" and "[Finally, There's a Race-Free Test to Check Kidney Function](#)."

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