Lung Disease Forces More Blacks Back to the Hospital

September 27, 2011

When researchers reviewed hospital readmission trends for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), they found that African Americans, ages 40 and older, had the highest rates of hospital readmissions in 30 days or less when compared with same-aged patients of other races and ethnicities, according to a statistical brief published by the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and reported by MedlinePlus.

COPD is a common lung disease that includes diagnoses of bronchitis and/or emphysema. Many patients with the disease experience fatigue, difficulty breathing and other respiratory problems that may require hospitalization. COPD is incurable, often worsens over time and can eventually lead to death.

Looking at 2008 data from 15 geographically dispersed states, researchers focused on initial hospital admission and readmission records for patients diagnosed with COPD, ages 40 and older. Findings showed that of the 190,700 patients who were admitted to the hospital for COPD-related problems, readmissions for African Americans were 30 percent higher compared with Hispanics, Asians or Pacific Islanders, and 9 percent higher than for white counterparts. And readmission was more than 10 percent more likely for men than women.

In addition, data showed COPD patients from low-income communities were readmitted to the hospital 22 percent more often than those from wealthy areas. But findings revealed that the average cost of being readmitted was about 18 percent to 50 percent higher than the price tag for the initial visit—in other words, the folks most likely to be readmitted were those least likely to afford treatment.

Although this study focused exclusively on the cases and costs of readmitting COPD patients to the hospital, other research focused on the reasons behind the numbers. These studies found smoking, air pollution, improper use of an inhaler, lack of pulmonary rehabilitation programs and poor adherence to a drug therapy program are the main reasons COPD patients must be readmitted to the hospital.

Researchers acknowledged that some readmissions are unavoidable but they could be

significantly reduced by strengthened interventions and outpatient management.

Click here to read about one woman’s struggle with another breath-stealer, cigarette addiction.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

http://beta.docker.realhealthmag.com/article/lung-disease-readmission-21183-7702