

New Video Series Delves Into Racism in Cancer Care

Fred Hutch, Cierra Sisters collaboration designed for patients and caregivers as well as providers, policy makers, clinical staff

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Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center partnered with the [Cierra Sisters](#), a Seattle-based patient advocacy group, to produce a series of short videos to acknowledge and address the racism many women of color experience while dealing with breast cancer. Some women report that their issues begin when they approach their general practitioner with a concern, and it sometimes persists throughout diagnosis, cancer treatment and pain management.

Bridgette Hempstead, founder of Cierra Sisters, points to evidence of systemic racism during the COVID-19 pandemic and recounts how the recent challenges that people of color faced with the health care system echo what she went through 27 years ago when a doctor told her she shouldn't worry about getting a mammogram because Black women don't get breast cancer, a blatant falsehood.

The [Anti-Racism in Oncology video project](#) is the result of a collaboration that began in 2021.

"I was invited by the Center for Health Care Strategies to respond to a call for applications," Hempstead said. "The organization was convening an action-oriented 18-month learning collaborative to support partnership sites in developing and testing solutions that directly and intentionally address bias and racism in oncology care."

She said [CHCS](#), a policy design and implementation partner focused on improving outcomes for people enrolled in Medicaid, was looking for applicant teams that included staff from both a health system and a community stakeholder organization.

"Given the long-standing partnership between Cierra Sisters and Fred Hutch around other projects, this seemed like a perfect opportunity to collaborate," Hempstead said.

For almost three decades, Cierra Sisters has been involved in training and health education projects, and Hempstead has appeared in numerous television and newspaper stories. She came to realize, however, that there was a need for a more sustained educational effort around racism. That became the motivation to produce this video project.

“I wanted to create something that could be used over and over without having to invest resources every time it was rolled out,” she said “What I like about the videos is that they can be used to supplement written materials or in-person teaching.”

The videos contain stories of real people, and they provide an opportunity to have conversations about racism in health care. The videos can be used across the country to promote a no-tolerance of racism policy in every institution, Hempstead said.

In the video above, Dr. Julie Gralow discusses actions that should be taken to address racism in cancer care and research. (Video by Robert Hood / Fred Hutch News Service / Cierra Sisters)

A [recent survey by KFF](#), a nonprofit source for health policy research, polling and journalism, found about one in five Black adults (18%) say they have been treated unfairly or with disrespect by a health care provider in the past three years because of their race or ethnic background. An article published last month in the [Journal of Medical Imaging and Radiation Sciences](#) highlighted the need for new, more inclusive modern medical terminology and grading tools to help reduce continued racial bias in radiotherapy treatment and education.

Hempstead is focused on trying to reach Black patients and their caregivers as well as providers, policy makers and clinical staff. She wants patients to know it’s OK to find care somewhere else if they aren’t being heard and are not being well treated.

“I want providers to know underneath our Black skin, we are human beings. I would like them to pause before they walk into a room to see a patient, set aside their preconceived stereotypes, and see their Black patient as a person and listen to them,” Hempstead said.

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