

“The Walking Dead” Star Joins Fight Against a Silent Killer

A new campaign aims to increase awareness about sarcoidosis among African Americans.

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Sarcoidosis is a rare inflammatory disease that affects Black women more than anyone else. The disease is characterized by the formation of abnormal masses made up of inflamed tissues in certain organs and may sometimes be difficult to diagnose.

[Data](#) show that African-American women are three times more likely to develop sarcoidosis than white women and they may also experience chronic and severe symptoms.

While this disease has long been associated with Black men—comedian [Bernie Mac died](#) of complications from the disease in 2008—African-American women have a mortality rate 1.5 times higher and a hospitalization rate twice that of Black men.

The Walking Dead actress Jeryl Prescott knows firsthand the impact sarcoidosis has on Black women. As a first-time mother, Prescott ignored such initial symptoms as red, inflamed eyes, attributing them to the fatigue all new moms can experience.

“I was busy working, being a wife, being a mom, and I put myself last and thought the redness would go away,” Prescott told [theGrio](#).

When her symptoms persisted, Prescott discovered that sarcoidosis was the cause. Of the [nine types of sarcoidosis](#), Black women frequently experience more chronic and severe forms of pulmonary and cardiac sarcoidosis. Multiple organs are likely to be impacted in African American women as well.

Since her diagnosis, Prescott has teamed up with the [Foundation for Sarcoidosis Research](#) and its “Ignore No More” campaign to raise awareness of the disease, which affects [3% of African-American women](#). The campaign is one of the first to emphasize the little-known disease.

Beyond educating and encouraging the Black community to learn more about this disease, Prescott said this campaign also works to hold medical professionals accountable.

“Too often, Black women experience less attention from their doctors, and their symptoms aren’t

believed,” Prescott told [theGrio](#). “This campaign sends the message to health care providers and researchers that they cannot ignore the needs of African-American women anymore.”

She also advised Black women to prioritize their health and have conversations with their girlfriends about any symptoms they experience.

“If you are a Black woman and don’t have sarcoidosis, you need to know it exists because you probably know someone who does,” she advised. “We have always looked out for each other and now, more than ever, we need to do that concerning this.”

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