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HEALTH & WELFARE | DAILY REPORT

California outpatient care worst for blacks

June 3, 2011 | Joanna Lin



U.S. Census Bureau

Blacks experience the poorest quality of ambulatory care of any race or ethnic group in California, according to a federal report released Wednesday.

Compared with non-Hispanic whites, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics of all races, blacks have the highest hospital admission rates for respiratory disease, heart disease and diabetes, an analysis by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality found. Admissions could have been avoided, at least in part, through high-quality outpatient care, the agency said.

The findings are part of annual profiles of health care quality in every state. The 2010 profiles examine more

than 100 performance measures, from the rate of breast cancer deaths to the percentage of pneumonia patients receiving the recommended hospital care. Compared to other states, **California's performance** was average.

But **disparities** among racial and ethnic minorities and low-income residents persist in every state. Nationwide, blacks and American Indians and Alaska Natives received worse care than whites in about 40 percent of health care quality measures. They also had worse access to care than whites.

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Such disparities are not surprising, said Ellen Wu, executive director of the California Pan-Ethnic Health Network, a nonprofit that seeks to eliminate health disparities.

"I really think it has to do with the environment people go home to," she said. "We do not invest enough in prevention. ... We're doing the stomach-stapling surgery instead of addressing really what works: creating environments in the workplace, in schools, in the neighborhood and homes that promote health."

In California, black adults were admitted to the hospital for congestive heart failure 3.7 times more than Asian/Pacific Islanders, three times more than whites and 2.4 times more than Hispanics.

Long-term diabetes complications sent 269 of every 100,000 black adults to the hospital. That's a rate 1.4 times that of Hispanics, 3.5 of whites and 3.9 of Asian/Pacific Islanders.

Rates of hospital admissions for asthma in California were highest among blacks of all age groups. Among children, for example, 247 of every 100,000 blacks went to the hospital for asthma – a rate nearly four times that of whites.

Asthma is **increasing every year** in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. One in 12 people had asthma in 2009, compared with 1 in 14 in 2001. Black children saw the greatest rise in asthma rates during this time – a nearly 50 percent increase.

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