



HEALTH ANSWERS

Aggressive Blood Cancer Twice As Likely To Affect African Americans

(NAPSA)—When people think of cancer, multiple myeloma (MM) is not likely to be top of mind. Although it is a rare blood cancer, this aggressive, rapidly progressive disease is the second most common type of blood cancer in the U.S., disproportionately affecting African Americans and the elderly in particular. In fact, MM is one of the top 10 causes of cancer deaths among African Americans. Studies show African Americans are twice as likely to be diagnosed with the disease versus Caucasians, and recent statistics indicate both increasing incidence and younger age of onset.

What Is Multiple Myeloma?

Multiple myeloma causes certain white blood cells, normally responsible for fighting disease, to be overproduced. The buildup of these abnormal cells, known as myeloma cells, causes the growth of tumors that may spread to multiple sites in the body, hence the term “multiple myeloma.”

Currently, more than 45,000 to 50,000 people have MM, and approximately 15,000 new cases are diagnosed each year. The disease occurs more frequently in men than in women.

Stem cell transplant, a procedure in which the patient receives stem cells from the blood of a donor to build up the immune system, combined with high-dose chemotherapy, has long been considered by many to be the most effective treatment for MM. However, approximately half of MM

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patients are not eligible for this approach. In addition, statistics show that African Americans have a lower registration rate for becoming potential bone marrow and stem cell donors than Caucasians, and are less likely to participate in clinical trials with newer treatments. For these reasons, there is an important need for new treatments that offer similar results, particularly for the African American community.

The symptoms of MM can commonly occur as a result of other conditions, making the disease difficult to diagnose. Because MM tumors cause bone destruction that can lead to fractures, patients are often diagnosed with the disease after breaking one or more bones. It's important for African Americans to see their doctor if they experience symptoms such as bone and muscle pain, numbness, muscle weakness, or infections including pneumonia. In fact, patients with MM are 15 times more likely to develop infections.

There are newer treatments that are helping people with MM to live longer. Only your doctor can diagnose MM and determine the treatment plan that is best for you.