

Higher breast cancer rates in Black women linked to healthcare access more than genetics, concludes study challenging other findings

The poorer breast cancer outcomes and higher death rates among Black women are most likely the result of racial disparities in access to health care — not genetics.

That's the implication of a [new Penn Medicine study](#). The findings contradict previous, smaller studies that found Black women had a higher genetic risk of breast cancer.

[Editor's note: Other researchers have come to a different conclusion about the nature of this outcome disparity. Read more here: [Black women are six times more likely than White women to develop tumors that lead to breast cancer. Do genetically-based racial differences play a role?](#)]

The Penn researchers found no significant difference in risk in a study of nearly 30,000 patients — 5.65% of Black women and 5.06% of white women had a genetic mutation that increased their risk of breast cancer.

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The new study suggests race should not be an independent factor when considering genetic testing, [said](#) Dr. Susan Domchek, executive director of Penn's Bassett Center for BRCA.

"We shouldn't make changes to testing guidelines based on race alone," Domchek said. "Rather, our efforts should focus on ensuring equal access to and uptake of testing to minimize disparities in care and outcomes."

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