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New Breast Cancer Survey Finds Minority Women Less Aware than White Women of Risks and Less Likely to Have Mammograms

A new survey finds that African American and Hispanic women are less aware than White women about the risks of breast cancer. They are also less likely to have mammograms, and less knowledgeable of what mammograms are – and perhaps more importantly, what they are not.

These are some of the results of a nationwide survey of 522 adult American women conducted for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation by Harris Interactive. The survey was conducted by telephone in May of this year.

“The differences found in this survey between White and minority women are particularly important because African American and Hispanic women are more likely to die from breast cancer than White women. In fact, the five-year survival rate for African American women is 70 percent, compared to 86 percent for White women,” said Susan Brown, M.S., R.N., health educator for the Komen Foundation.

While the differences among African American, Hispanic and White women in this new survey are substantial, it is also striking that there is room for a great deal of improvement, in both knowledge and behavior among all women. For example, large numbers of White, African American and Hispanic women do not believe they are at risk for breast cancer, do not perform breast self-examinations, and (among women ages 40 and over) do not have routine mammograms.

However, this survey is particularly a wake-up call to African American and Hispanic women, to minority community leaders and to the health care system. Note the following significant findings:

- Only 28 percent of African American and Hispanic women, compared to 41 percent of White women, believe they are at risk for breast cancer.
- Only 8 percent of minority women ages 40 and older, compared to 38 percent of White women ages 40 and older, have routine mammograms.
- There is much more misinformation about mammography in the minority community. Fully 29 percent of African American and Hispanic women believe, wrongly, that mammograms are a way to treat breast cancer, compared to only 11 percent of White women who believe the same. And 43 percent of minority women, compared to 23 percent of White women, incorrectly believe that mammograms can prevent breast cancer.

“The results of this survey help to clarify the myths that some women have about mammography and breast cancer,” Brown said. “Armed with this information, we believe we will be able to reach minority women at an early age more effectively and empower them to adopt life-long, positive breast health habits that may save their lives.”

On breast self-examination there is no significant difference; two-thirds (67 percent) of African American and Hispanic women perform breast self-exams, at least several times a year or monthly, as compared with 64 percent of White women who do so—but that still leaves one-third of women who do not. The Komen Foundation recommends that all women perform breast self-exams monthly beginning at age 20.

It should be noted that the sample sizes are relatively small. The survey compares a sample of 423 white women with 71 African American and Hispanic women. However, all of the differences described above are statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. What this survey does not allow us to do, however, is to provide separate data for African American and Hispanic women, as the samples would be too small.

TABLE 1

	White Women	African-American and Hispanic Women
Base	423	71
	%	%
Believe they are at risk for breast cancer ¹	41	28
Perform breast self-exam several times a year or monthly	64	67
Have routine mammograms (women ages 40 and older ²)	38	8
Believe mammogram is a way to treat breast cancer	11	29
Believe mammogram can prevent breast cancer	23	43

¹ Base: women who have not been previously diagnosed with breast cancer (white: 411 and minority: 70).

² Base: women ages 40 and older (white: 309 and minority: 42).

About Harris Interactive®

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About the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation was established 20 years ago by Nancy Brinker to honor the memory of her sister, Susan G. Komen, who died of breast cancer at the age of 36. Today, the Foundation has more than 75,000 volunteers working through a network of U.S. and international Affiliates and events like the Komen Race for the Cure® to eradicate breast cancer as a life-threatening disease by advancing research, education, screening and treatment. Since its inception in 1982, the Komen Foundation and its Affiliate Network have raised \$450 million for the fight against breast cancer. For more information, visit www.komen.org

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