

The Impact of Prostate Cancer in New Jersey

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I will talk about a few of the key epidemiologic facts about prostate cancer in New Jersey. This is the website if you want to learn more about the Essex County Cancer Coalition. Three good places to look for cancer data are the CDC, the NCI, and NJ Department of Health and Senior Services.

One question to consider is what is the likelihood that I am ever going to get prostate cancer? The lifetime probability, from life to death, of ever being diagnosed with prostate cancer is a little bit higher in New Jersey than it is in the U.S., approximately one in six. Compared to other often publicized figures, the risk of women getting breast cancer is about one in eight. Men are more likely to get prostate cancer than women are to get breast cancer, yet, we don't make nearly as much noise about it.

Dividing lifetime probabilities into race and ethnicity nationwide, and looking at the typical middle aged 50-year-old man and what his risk is of being diagnosed with prostate cancer, it is roughly one in six; in Blacks, it is about one in five. This assumes one made it to the age of 50, so you are a little more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer because you have gotten past the early mortality possibilities where death occurs due to other causes and not prostate cancer. Risk of dying of prostate cancer for White men is about 3%; for Black men, about 5%. There is a serious disparity here. For Asian Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaskan Natives, it is lower; why that is so is not clear.

This looks at how many men have ever been diagnosed with prostate cancer. We have estimates from the U.S. and NJ. There are about 61,500 guys, or there were, and that is a rough estimate in NJ.

There are no national estimates by age, but in NJ, almost one in nine men age 65 and above are estimated to be a prostate cancer survivor. Interestingly, even though prostate cancer is more likely to hit Black men, there is a lower rate of Black men who have ever been diagnosed with prostate cancer, given that a greater proportion of Black men are younger. But for any specific age, the rates for both new cases and death from prostate cancer are higher in Black men. At every age, Black men are more likely to have new cases of prostate cancer than White men. Thus, you can see a racial disparity there.

Death from prostate cancer is age related: the older you are, the more likely you will die of prostate cancer, regardless of race. Here is the disparity between Blacks and Whites in prostate cancer mortality at every age.

Also, NJ actually has a higher rate of new cases per year in each category, White, Black, and Hispanic, than the U.S. as a whole. NJ overall has the fifth highest prostate cancer incidence rate in the country among all the states. Looking at NJ by counties, for all men, Essex County holds the highest rate in the state, yet broken down by Blacks and Whites, Essex County does not have the highest rate for either Black men or White men. The largest concentration by far of Black men in NJ is Essex County.

If we compare deaths due to prostate cancer, or mortality, in NJ versus states in the U.S., NJ actually does better in each of these racial and ethnic groups and has lower mortality than the U.S. While we may have high incidence rates of prostate cancer in NJ, we either are catching it earlier or treating it better; it is not dramatic, but we are doing a little bit better than the U.S. as a whole. As a matter of fact, we are among the lowest in terms of death rates, 40th out of 51, including D.C. as a state.

Historically, this chart looks at mortality, or death due to prostate cancer for men of all ages, comparing NJ and U.S. Whites, and NJ and U.S. Blacks. NJ and U.S. Blacks tend to be very similar; NJ and U.S. Whites tend to be very similar. There is that large disparity. Prostate cancer death rates were increasing until around the early 1990s, possibly due to considerable progress being made in dealing with competing causes of mortality, such as heart disease and lung cancer.

The Essex County Cancer Coalition is the comprehensive cancer control organization for Essex County. All the various stakeholders working on cancer, whether it is survivors or health care providers or local government agencies or the corporate sector, work with us or should work with us.