

Abstract

Why didn't I know about this? overlapping absences of postmenopausal black women in clinical gynecology, cancer disparities, & reproductive justice

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Endometrial cancer (EC) exists at the nexus of gynecology, oncology, and reproductive health. U.S. Black women with EC have a 90% higher mortality risk than White women. This disparity is driven by a modifiable factor: stage at diagnosis, where 70% percent of White women, versus 53% of Black women, are diagnosed early. Prior analysis of population-level data and qualitative interviews showed that Black women are less likely to receive guideline-concordant gynecologic care before diagnosis, that they report misinterpretation of common EC symptoms, and they experience healthcare provider reactions to symptom disclosure that are misaligned with their cancer risk. These findings formed the basis of this study – a critical analysis of clinical gynecology, cancer disparities, and reproductive justice discourses, to determine how they represent Black women at risk of EC. Data sources were professional society clinical guideline statements, published academic and clinical reviews, and interview transcripts from 15 Black EC survivors. I find that embodied postmenopausal Black women are absent from these discursive spaces in which they belong - in particular ways that can be traced, and that overlap to create a hyper-vulnerability which contributes to advance stage at diagnosis for Black women with EC. I interpret these discursive patterns through the lens of structural racism, directly with the consequence of biological racial definitions and indirectly with the shape of the resistance movement of reproductive justice. I conclude with recommendations for discursive shifts for public health discourse to more accurately represent the experience and gynecologic risks of postmenopausal Black women.

Advocacy for health and health education Other professions or practice related to public health Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs Provision of health care to the public Public health or related organizational policy, standards, or other guidelines Social and behavioral sciences

