

Risk of aggressive breast cancer subtype three times higher for black women

25 March 2009

Lifestyle, age and weight have all been considered as risk factors for breast cancer. Now a study published in the open access journal *Breast Cancer Research* has found that even taking these factors into consideration, black women face three times the risk of developing an aggressive 'triple negative tumour' compared to women of other racial backgrounds.

In the US, which has the highest rate of [breast cancer](#) in the world, the overall incidence of breast cancer is lower in [black women](#) than in white women. Yet when black women do get breast cancer, it tends to be more advanced when diagnosed, has a higher risk of recurring and a less favourable outcome.

A research team led by Dr Carol Rosenberg at Boston University School of Medicine searched hospital records from the Boston Medical Center, focusing on 415 breast cancer cases. The team looked at clinical features particularly patient age, weight and race/ethnicity, and pathological features including the triple-negative pattern - tumours that lack expression of the estrogen receptor, the progesterone receptor and the [HER2 gene](#).

According to Rosenberg, "The odds of having a triple negative tumour were three times higher for black women than for non-black women in the study. Previously, it was known that pre-menopausal black women had more triple negative tumors. What we found that was new was that these tumours were just as common in black women diagnosed before or after age 50, and in those who were or were not obese."

Rosenberg adds, "The higher prevalence of triple negative breast tumours in black women in all age and weight categories likely contributes to black women's unfavourable [breast cancer prognosis](#)."

Triple negative breast cancers are increased in

black women regardless of age or body mass index, Lesley Stead, Timothy L Lash, Jerome Sobieraj, Dorcas Chi, Jennifer Westrup, Marjory Charlot, Rita Blanchard, John-cho Lee, Thomas King and Carol L Rosenberg, *Breast Cancer Research* (in press), breast-cancer-research.com/

Source: BioMed Central ([news](#) : [web](#))

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