



BLACK WOMEN'S HEALTH STUDY

Summer 2025 e-newsletter

bwhs@bu.edu



*Working together
to improve the health
of Black women*

- **BWHS in the news**
- **Sharing BWHS results**
- **New research publications**
- **POLL: Do you use social media?**

bu.edu/bwhs

Calling BWHS? If you request a call back, please check that your voicemail isn't full. Depending on your phone service, a call from BWHS may display as Boston University or show a phone number starting with "617". We look forward to speaking with you!

New address/phone? Update [here](#).

[Health Awareness Calendar](#)

Do you use social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc.)? Let us know where you would like to see us by answering [this poll](#).



2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Black Women's Health Study. Thank you so much for your continued participation in the study. The information you have provided continues to be a rich, one-of-a-kind source for research on many aspects of Black women's health. It is a remarkable achievement.

We're often asked why your response to questionnaires continues to be important. BWHS researchers are always looking to better understand how the lifetime experience of participants affects their health. Each additional year of information helps us to better understand the factors that may contribute to or protect from disease. Current research topics include breast cancer, Parkinson's disease, cognitive health, lung cancer, and inflammatory bowel disease.

Our goal is to increase knowledge and understanding to improve health outcomes for Black women. To share results from BWHS research, we publish articles in scientific journals, we present at conferences attended by other researchers and health care providers, we participate in public discussions, and we reach out to the media about our work. A list of all BWHS research results is available on the study's website: <https://www.bu.edu/bwhs/publications>.

If you have not yet responded to the 2024-2025 Health Survey, we are still eager to hear from you. Please visit: <https://slone-web.bu.edu/bwhs/2024/login.php>.

BWHS in the News

- The Lung Cancer Screening Study (INSPIRE), on which we are collaborating with Massachusetts General Hospital, was featured on the Nightly NBC News segment with Lester Holt. A BWHS participant discussed how the screening benefited her. The study is mentioned at minutes 11:50 through 14:22 of the NBC broadcast: <https://www.nbcnews.com/nightly-news-netcast/video/nightly-news-full-broadcast-november-22nd-225261637569>
- Linda Villarosa, a BWHS participant, interviewed dozens of scientists, government officials, historians, and others about the history of research linking chemicals in hair relaxers and reproductive health issues from early puberty to uterine cancer, many of which are more common among Black women than among women of other racial and ethnic groups. Her article, *The Disturbing Truth About Hair Relaxers*, was published in the New York Times Magazine (June 13, 2024) and reviews the evidence to date and raises concerns about marketing and regulation of these products in the U.S. BWHS research and Dr. Yvette Cozier are cited in the article.

Sharing results with the scientific and medical community

BWHS researchers discussed recent research at:

- **American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting**

Chicago, IL (June 2024)

- “Testing many to find the few: When and in whom will polygenic risk scores be ready for implementation?” Julie Palmer, ScD

- **The Science of Cancer Health Disparities in Racial/Ethnic Minorities and the Medically Underserved, AACR Conference**

Los Angeles, CA (September 2024)

- “Knowledge, attitudes, and self-efficacy toward cancer genetic testing among Black women with and without breast cancer” Kim Bertrand, ScD
- “Neighborhood disadvantage and multiple myeloma risk among Black women living in the United States” Etienne Holder, PhD

- **San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium**

San Antonio, TX (December 2024)

- “Associations between social drivers of health and breast cancer stage at diagnosis among U.S. Black women” Mollie Barnard, ScD

- **Next in Science: Next in Women's Health, Harvard Radcliffe Institute**

Cambridge, MA (March 2025)

- “Place and health: neighborhood-level influences on breast cancer survival” (recording available, beginning of second session in second video: <https://www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/event/2025-next-in-womens-health-lecture>) Etienne Holder, PhD

- **American Society for Preventive Oncology Annual Meeting**

Philadelphia, PA (April 2025)

- “Factors influencing the uptake of healthy lifestyle changes among breast cancer survivors in the BWHS” Mollie Barnard, ScD

- **Women's Health Symposium, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center**

Buffalo, NY (May 2025)

- Julie Palmer, ScD and BWHS Advisory Board member Ellen Grant, PhD, LCSW-R participated

- **Society for Epidemiological Research**

Boston, MA (June, 2025)

- “Depressive symptoms in relation to breast cancer mortality: findings from the Black Women's Health Study” Nora Xu, MSPH
- “Perceived racism and depression in a cohort of middle-aged US Black women: the role of potential modifiers” Virginia Cafferky, MPH

Publications

Hypertension and risk of endometrial cancer: a pooled analysis in the Epidemiology of Endometrial Cancer Consortium (E2C2)

Endometrial cancer is the most common type of cancer of the uterus (womb). Rates of endometrial cancer have increased in recent years and the reasons are unclear. In this research, which combined data from several studies including BWHS, we examined whether hypertension, which has also increased over time, was linked to development of endometrial cancer. We found that women with hypertension were more likely to be diagnosed with this cancer, and this was especially the case among younger women who had not yet gone through the menopause. These results may provide clues as to how endometrial cancer develops, which in turn could lead to improved prevention or treatments.

(published in Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers and Prevention, 2024, Volume 33, Issue 6)



Neighborhood Disadvantage, Individual Experiences of Racism, and Breast Cancer Survival

One of the major aims of the BWHS is to uncover reasons for why survival after breast cancer continues to be lower among Black women than among white women. Due to the long history of discrimination in housing and mortgage lending in the U.S., Black Americans are more likely to live in neighborhoods with fewer resources, regardless of their income or education. We examined whether neighborhood characteristics were related to survival among BWHS participants with breast cancer. We found that living in disadvantaged neighborhoods was linked to a higher mortality from breast cancer, even after taking into account the stage of the cancer at diagnosis and cancer treatments. The findings suggest that community-level interventions to improve resources in disadvantaged neighborhoods, including access to high-quality cancer care, may be critical to reducing racial disparities in breast cancer survival. *(published in JAMA Network Open, 2025, Volume 8, Issue 4)*

To see our complete publication list with full references, please visit:

<https://www.bu.edu/bwhs/research/publications/>

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