Liver Cancer Transplant Rates May Differ by Race

At a major transplant center in Indiana, despite similar levels of liver disease severity, Blacks had a lower transplant rate than whites.

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A major liver transplant center in Indiana provides new organs to whites at a higher rate than Blacks despite comparable levels of liver disease severity between the two groups, MedPage Today reports.

Researchers analyzed data from an Indiana cancer registry on all individuals with liver cancer who received treatment at two large university health centers in the state between January 2000 and June 2014. There were 1,250 people in the cohort, including 1,032 whites, 164 Blacks, 24 Asians and 22 Latinos.

Results were presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases in Washington, DC.

Between the white and Black groups, respective demographics included: average age, 62 years and 60 years; proportion of females, a respective 26 percent and 30 percent; proportion with high blood pressure, 54 percent and 64 percent; proportion with cirrhosis of the liver, 88 percent and 92 percent; mean liver tumor size, 4.68 centimeters and 5.3 cm (1.84 inches and 2.09 inches); proportion who abused alcohol, 42 percent and 59 percent; body-mass index, or BMI, 29 and 27 (a BMI between 25 and 30 is considered overweight); proportion with diabetes (38 percent and 37 percent); proportion diagnosed with viral hepatitis, including hepatitis B and C viruses, 51.5 percent and 83.4 percent.

With respect to standardized measures of the severity of liver disease, whites and Blacks had similar scores. The average MELD (Model for End-Stage Liver Disease) score was 12.45 among whites and 13.59 among Blacks. According to the BCLC (Barcelona Clinic Liver Cancer) score, 25 percent of whites and 27 percent of Blacks had stage A of liver cancer (an early stage) while a respective 13 percent and 8 percent had Stage B (an intermediate stage). Child-Pugh scores, which estimate the prognosis of advanced liver disease, primarily cirrhosis, were also similar between the two groups.

On the liver treatment front, 20 percent of whites received palliative or hospice care, compared

with 31 percent of Blacks, while a respective 16 percent and 10 percent received resection (surgery to remove all or part) of their liver tumors.

A respective 26 percent and 14 percent of whites and Blacks received liver transplants.

The overall survival rate was 29 percent among whites and 27 percent among Blacks.

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