

Study finds people of color more likely to participate in cancer clinical trials

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People of color, those with a higher income and younger individuals are more likely to participate in clinical trials during their cancer treatment according to a new study from the University of Missouri School of Medicine.

Clinical [trials](#) are research studies that involve people who volunteer to take part in tests of new drugs, current approved drugs for a new purpose or medical devices.

The study analyzed data collected from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey, which is an annual national telephone survey designed to collect health-related data from U.S. adults. Survey years selected included the question, "Did you participate in a clinical trial as part of your [cancer](#) treatment?" The analysis of 20,053 respondents revealed an average overall clinical trial participation rate of 6.51%. Among 17,600 white respondents, participation was 6.24%; among 445 Hispanic respondents, participation was 11%; and among 943 Black respondents, participation was 8.27%.

"This study informs our understanding of who is participating in cancer clinical trials," said Lincoln Sheets, MD, Ph.D., assistant research professor at the MU School of Medicine. "We found people of color were more likely to participate in cancer clinical trials than white cancer patients when controlling for other demographic factors. It could be that in previous studies, the effects of income, sex or age were muddling the true picture."

Sheets said the analysis also indicated people who earn more than the national median household income of \$50,000 annually and the young were more likely to participate in clinical trials during [cancer treatment](#).

"Taken in total, the results of this study help confirm that there are sociodemographic disparities in cancer clinical trials, indicating there are deficiencies in the system as it stands now," Sheets said. "We must lessen financial barriers to participation, improve logistical accessibility of cancer clinical trials and loosen restrictions on the enrollment of patients with comorbidities."

Sheets said improving access to transportation, childcare and [health insurance](#) would remove some of the structural and logistical barriers that prevent people from participating in cancer [clinical trials](#).

More information: Shelby Meyer et al, Sociodemographic diversity in cancer clinical trials: New findings on the effect of race and ethnicity, *Contemporary Clinical Trials Communications* (2021). [DOI: 10.1016/j.conctc.2021.100718](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conctc.2021.100718)

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