

Childhood cancer deals African Americans poor survival rate

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BETHESDA, Md. (PRNewswire-USNewswire) — Childhood cancer is rare. Children with cancer account for less than 1 percent of all new cancer cases in the United States.

But cancer is the second leading cause of death (after accidents) among children ages 1 to 14. It is estimated that in 2012 in the United States, more than 12,000 children (ages 0 - 14) will be diagnosed with cancer and more than 1,300 will die from it.

There is good news in that, over the past 20 years, childhood cancer deaths overall have dropped, and many more children are surviving a cancer diagnosis. For example, only 58 percent of children ages 0 - 14 diagnosed in 1975 - 1977 lived at least five years after diagnosis, whereas it is estimated that more than 80 percent of those diagnosed today will make it to the 5-year mark.

This improvement is due to advances in treatment and to the high participation of children with cancer in clinical trials.

Although African-American children are less likely than white children to develop cancer, their five-year survival rate is poorer, according to the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program.

The most common types of childhood cancer are leukemias (blood cell cancers) and cancers of the brain and central nervous system. The causes of childhood cancers are largely unknown, and researchers are trying to learn about possible risk factors.

Despite the improvements in outcomes overall, some types of childhood cancer remain very difficult to treat and have low cure rates. NCI continues to try to find more effective treatments for all childhood cancers through research and clinical trials.

If you have a child with cancer, you can learn about cancer clinical trials and what benefits they may offer, at NCI's website, cancer.gov/clinicaltrials/learningabout

For more information, visit cancer.gov/cancertopics/types/childhoodcancers or call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237). More culturally relevant Lifelines articles and videos are available at cancer.gov/lifelines

*Editor's note: The following is part of the Lifelines education and awareness print series that the National Cancer Institute provides to African-American news and information outlets.