**Challenges to Breast Cancer Disparity Elimination in Memphis Tennessee**

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Memphis, Tennessee ranks first in the US in racial disparities in breast cancer mortality.  This study explored causes of this disparity for black women in Memphis by exploring their perceptions about, barriers to, and decisions about breast health prevention strategies and treatment decisions.

 Three data sources inform this study.  The Consortium on Health Education, Economic Empowerment and Research (CHEER), a NIMHD Exploratory Center on Health Disparities, implemented a health risk appraisal (Healthy People Network)among 170 community residents of Memphis’ most impoverished zip code—38126.  Of these participants, forty-four were women aged >40. This appraisal describes the preventive breast health behaviors of these residents.  During the summer of 2012, we conducted a survey of perceptions of breast cancer prevention and barriers to preventive services. Additionally, a focus group of breast cancer survivors will be conducted to explore their breast cancer treatment experience.

 Among low income black women age 40 and older 23% had never had a mammogram, and 61% had not had a mammogram in 2 or more years. Twelve percent of these women had never had a clinical breast exam by a healthcare provider. Additionally, 39% rarely or never had examined their own breasts. Black women think that they are unlikely to get breast cancer. Insurance appears to be a barrier to obtaining preventative care. There was a prevailing attitude that black women have a higher mortality rate because they don’t “take care of themselves,” compared to white women.

Findings inform about potential factors that contribute to breast cancer disparities among black women in Memphis. Interventions are needed that eliminate barriers to access and utilization of preventive services.