

NATIONAL

Study: Black Women Face Poorer Outcomes from Hysterectomies

NEW YORK (AP) — Black women who get hysterectomies face greater risks of long hospitalizations and dying in the hospital than white women do, a study suggests.

Black women were nearly three times as likely to remain hospitalized for more than 10 days, and three times as likely to die in the hospital, researchers found in analyzing more than 50,000 patients.

The reasons for those disparities and others found in the study aren't known, said study co-author Kristen Kjerulff. But further study might illuminate important racial differences in health and medical care of women, she said.

She said the data could not reveal whether differences in health care or socioeconomic status played any

role.

Kjerulff is an assistant professor of epidemiology at the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore.

Hysterectomy is the removal of the uterus, and it is one of the nation's most frequent operations. It is most often done to treat noncancerous tumors called fibroids, which can cause pain and heavy menstrual bleeding. Other reasons for hysterectomies include menstrual disorders, a condition called uterine prolapse in which the uterus moves down into the vagina, or cancer of the uterus or cervix.

The researchers studied hospital discharge records for all hysterectomies performed at nonmilitary hospitals in Maryland from 1986 to 1991, a total of 53,159.

Seventy percent of the patients were white and 26 percent were black.

Researchers found that after they accounted for differences in age, hysterectomy technique, severity of other medical conditions and factors, black women ran about 40 percent greater risk of complications than white women had. The difference appeared in such complications as infection and unexplained fever.

Similar analyses found that black women were 2.7 times as likely to stay in the hospital more than 10 days, and 3.1 times as likely to die in the hospital. The overall hospital death rate was low, 19 per 10,000 hysterectomies, for blacks and whites combined.

Black women had the surgery at an average age of 42, about four years younger than white women did.

Blacks got hysterectomies at younger ages for each of a wide variety of diagnoses. That suggests the age disparity is due to something in the decision-making process that leads to hysterectomy rather than to an earlier appearance of the medical conditions, researchers said.

Blacks also had higher hysterectomy rates at ages younger than 50, leading to overall rates of about 50 surgeries per 10,000 black women compared with 41 per 10,000 white women.

Fibroids led to 65 percent of hysterectomies in blacks but only 29 percent for whites. Whites were more likely than blacks to have the surgery for cancer, uterine prolapse or an inflammation of the uterus lining called endometriosis.

New Jersey Gov.-Elect Whitman Visits Two Black Churches

▲ Critics claim she visited to thwart damaging allegations that her campaign paid off black ministers

ORANGE, N.J. (AP) — With Gov.-elect Christie Whitman in the congregation at two black churches, ministers told their flocks how much anguish her campaign manager created with statements that they received money to suppress the urban vote.

"The heart and soul of the African-American community is the African-American church," the Rev. Reginald T. Jackson said Sunday at St. Matthew African Methodist Episcopal Church. "This last week has seen much pain and suffering inflicted on the African-American clergy and community."

"For it to be implied that the African-American clergy can be bought or sold is repugnant and an affront to the African-American community," Jackson said to applause from about 300 worshippers.

Whitman and her husband, John, sat through the two services, sang hymns and even pitched contributions in to the churches' plates.

Whitman said little to reporters outside the churches except that the couple had come to pray and that she plans to take office in January. She declined additional comment on her fence-mending mission to the African-American community and its ministers in particular.

Outside St. Matthew, Walter Fields, political action director of the state NAACP chapter, reiterated his organization's stand that Whitman should not take office until a full investigation is completed.

Asked what campaign manager Ed Rollins should do, Whitman said he should "let his conscience

dictate," then got into her car.

Rollins told reporters last week that Republicans ran a \$500,000 operation to pay ministers not to encourage their congregations to vote in the Nov. 2 election, and paid Democratic vote-getting workers to stay home. He retracted his statement a day later.

Whitman has denied that the operation existed and has pledged to cooperate with any investigations. To support her claim, her campaign and the Republican State Committee released their campaign spending documents for the final weeks of the election on Saturday, nine days early.

Inside St. Matthew and First Baptist Church of Lincoln Gardens in Somerset, the suggestions for Rollins were more specific.

"I imagine Brother Rollins thought he could say anything about the church," First Baptist's Pastor DeForest B. Soaries Jr. told about 350 worshippers. "We never have been attacked in a manner like Ed Rollins did this week."

Soaries, at a news conference later, said he and leaders of 484 other churches throughout the state, including St. Matthew, planned to file a federal class-action defamation lawsuit against Rollins.

Soaries said the suit will not name Whitman, and is not related to a planned slander lawsuit against Rollins which was announced last Friday by the Revs. Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton.

"It's a distortion of the truth, it's vulgar and it panders to every racial prejudice we've ever seen," Soaries said of Rollins' statements.

His criticism did not extend

to Whitman, who sat in the second row of his church earlier Sunday.

"She was willing to affirm her belief in the integrity of the black church," Soaries said. "She said, 'I think this is an insult to black preachers and black people.'"

Jackson said Rollins' initial story about ministers was too ridiculous to believe.

"You're not going to have a half-million dollars be spread around and have it be a secret," Jackson said before delivering his

sermon. He drew laughs from the St. Matthew congregation when he said he did not buy a suit this week because of concern about the appearance of impropriety.

Jackson told reporters afterward that an investigation must proceed about allegations surrounding the prospect that "street money" was distributed to Democratic "get-out-the-vote" workers. In addition to the Democrats, the U.S. attorney in Newark, the FBI and the state are conducting investigations.

The Rev. said Rollins should give a statement under oath to resolve the matter.

Jackson welcomed Whitman and her husband to the church and said the time for partisan fighting has ended.

"The election is over," Jackson said. "Christie Todd Whitman deserves the support of every citizen of New Jersey to make the state the best state it can possibly be."

After Jackson's remarks, the choir sang "I've Got a Feeling

Everything's Going to be Alright" as Whitman joined the congregation in clapping along. During the time when the congregation greeted visitors, she seemed to return to the campaign trail, pumping hands and smiling broadly.

Parishioners echoed the minister's message of accepting Whitman and saving blame for Rollins.

"It's a positive step," said Ernest Griffin. "Everybody has to fall behind our elected governor."

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The soft drink giant PepsiCo cancelled its endorsement of Michael Jackson, shown in a Feb. 3 file photo during a news conference announcing the marketing agreement between him and Pepsi-Cola International, two days after Jackson backed out of a world tour claiming he was addicted to painkillers. The Pepsi endorsement was scheduled to end at the same time that Jackson's "Dangerous" tour ended. Jackson called an early end to the tour last Friday.