

National Minority Health Month

There are many aspects that impact your overall health and wellbeing. Genetic factors and lifestyle choices are among the most common determinants of your health. Given this, why are certain populations more susceptible to certain conditions than others? What other factors are at play to impact minority populations more than Caucasian populations? National Minority Health Month seeks to answer these questions while raising awareness of the widespread health disparities among populations.

National Minority Health Month is an initiative of the Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH). This year, the theme is "Bridging Health Equity Across Communities" in an effort to spread awareness about the social determinants of health—environmental, social and economic conditions.

Kidney disease and many of its causes affect minority populations at a disproportionately higher rate. African American, Hispanic, American Indian and Alaska Native adults are twice as likely as white adults to have diabetes, the leading cause of kidney disease. As CKD progresses, African American adults are 3.7 times more likely to have End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD). When ESRD happens, African Americans are less likely to receive a transplanted organ from a living donor and only 27% of all transplants in 2016 were to African American recipients. Whereas 31% of patients currently on dialysis are African American.

The efforts to explore the social determinants of health could greatly reduce these disparities for minority populations with kidney disease. Improving access to fresh and healthy foods in communities considered to be "food deserts" can help slow the progression of kidney disease by providing adequate nutrition to maintain kidney function, lowering blood pressure and controlling diabetes. Providing programs to combat poverty will allow individuals to improve their living conditions, purchase health insurance and prioritize their health.

While lifestyle choices and genetics are the primary determinant of health conditions, exploring the social determinants which inevitably influence lifestyle choices will begin to balance the scales in favor of health equity.

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