



## MS progresses more rapidly in blacks

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BUFFALO, N.Y., Feb. 9 (UPI) -- Fewer African-Americans develop multiple sclerosis than whites but their disease progresses more rapidly, University at Buffalo researchers found.

First author Dr. Bianca Weinstock-Guttman, director of the Baird Multiple Sclerosis Center in Kaleida Health's Buffalo General Hospital, said magnetic resonance images of 567 consecutive MS patients showed blacks with MS had more damage to brain tissue and had less normal white and gray matter compared to whites with the disease.

"Black patients showed more brain tissue damage and accumulated brain lesions faster than whites, along with rapid clinical deterioration," Weinstock-Guttman said in a statement. "The results provide further support that black patients experience a more severe disease, calling for individualized therapeutic interventions for this group of MS patients."

White matter refers to the parts of the brain that contain nerve fibers sheathed in a white fatty insulating protein called myelin. The white matter is responsible for communication between the various gray matter regions, where nerve cells are concentrated and where cognitive processing occurs.

The study involved 79 black patients and 488 white patients -- all older than age 18.

Black participants were significantly younger than whites and their disease was more severe than white patients', despite having MS for a shorter amount of time, the study found.

The findings are published online ahead of print of the Feb. 16 issue of the journal *Neurology*.

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