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Blacks misperceive cancer risk, study finds

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Blacks die from cancer at higher rates than whites, but they see themselves at lower risk of contracting the disease.

Though the finding runs contrary to what one might expect, it's the conclusion of a University at Buffalo study about perceived cancer risks.

It could play an important role in health care because perceptions about cancer risk may influence whether individuals seek medical advice or undergo screening tests before malignancies turn deadly, the authors said.

"If you think you could develop cancer, it can motivate you to undergo tests for early detection or to engage in behaviors that may reduce your risk, such as exercising and eating more fruits and vegetables," said Heather Orom, assistant professor in the UB School of Public Health and Health Professions.

Orom and her colleagues suggest that blacks perceived their cancer risk to be lower than whites, in part because they were less likely to know about a family history of cancer.

Individuals' perception of cancer risk, she said, also may be influenced by the views among family and friends, and within communities.

The study, published in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, is based on the responses of 5,581 adults who completed a 2007 survey by the National Cancer Institute.

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