

Cancer through black eyes - The views of UK based black men towards Cancer: A constructive grounded theory study

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Background: Little is known about black African (BA) and black African-Caribbean (BAC) men's views towards cancer; yet culture and acculturation determine the way in which people understand, explain and develop their attitudes towards cancer. Hence, cancer prevention and early detection strategies may not be sensitive to United Kingdom (UK)-based black men's views, affecting their awareness of risk factors and early detection services. An evidence-based understanding of black men's views towards cancer is needed to effectively target cancer prevention strategies. This qualitative study explored the influence of culture on the views of UK-based BA and BAC men towards cancer.

Methods: In collaboration with black community organisations based in four major cities in the UK, 25 participants were recruited using convenience and theoretical sampling methods. Data were collected using 33 semi-structured interviews, and analysed using grounded theory analytic procedures.

Results: Participants had distinct beliefs concerning the causes of cancer, which influenced how they viewed cancer as a whole. Cancer was not viewed as a purely medical condition. Black men's views

towards cancer were closely linked to socially constructed perspectives of themselves, linked with their cultural and religious beliefs, and shaped by what being a black male means in society, the meanings of historical phenomena like slavery, and the meanings ascribed to social systems and establishments, including the healthcare system. Clinical risk factors such as smoking and obesity had different meanings and symbolisation through black eyes. There were macro- and micro-level similarities and differences between BA and BAC men.

Conclusions: Cancer services and related public-health campaigns aimed at black men need to understand cancer through black eyes. Public health campaigns based solely on the clinical meaning of cancer are incongruent with black men's understandings of cancer, and therefore ineffective at reducing health inequality. Findings from this study can be used to inform public health policy makers and healthcare professionals more broadly, including professionals involved in health promotion, as well as charitable organisations that provide services to BA and BAC men.

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