



Access to bone marrow and stem cell transplant differs among different groups

Bone marrow, peripheral blood stem cells¹ and cord blood transplants are used to treat many cancers of the blood or lymph systems like leukemia, lymphoma, and multiple myeloma. These transplants are complicated and expensive, and can be risky. Yet they often offer the best chance for getting well.

Two studies looked at whether people have an equal chance to get a bone marrow or stem cell transplant when they need it. The researchers wanted to know if the patient's race or gender made a difference. **They found that transplants are used more often to treat leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma in Whites than in Blacks. It also found (in the first study listed below) that men get transplants more often than women.** The differences in care were smaller between men and women than the differences between races, however.

In the second study below, researchers looked at transplant results (from a related or unrelated donor) for Blacks and Whites with multiple myeloma. They wondered if doctors offer transplants less often to Blacks than Whites because the transplant results weren't as good. The study found Black transplant patients have successful transplant rates similar to Whites. This means that fear of poorer results is not a reason for doctors to avoid offering a transplant for a patient who is Black or African American.

Future research will try to find out why Blacks get transplants less often than Whites, even though they get multiple myeloma more often (as shown in other studies not listed here). The next step is to find solutions and help everyone have equal access to transplant therapy.

Access to hematopoietic stem cell transplantation: effect of race and gender. By Joshua TV, Rizzo JD, Zhang M-J, Hari PN, Kurian S, Pasquini M, Majhail NS, Lee SL, Horowitz MM. *Cancer* 2010 July 15;116(14):3469-3476.

Race and outcomes of autologous hematopoietic cell transplantation for multiple myeloma. By Hari PN, Majhail N, Zhang M-J, Hassebroek A, Siddiqui F, Ballen K, Bashey A, Bird J, Freytes C, Gibson J, Hale G, Holmberg L, Kamble R, Kyle R, Lazarus H, LeMaistre C, Loberiza F, Maiolino A, McCarthy P, Milone G, Omondi N, Reece D, Seftel M, Trigg M, Vesole D, Weiss B, Wiernik P, Lee S, Rizzo JD, Mehta P. *Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation* 2010 Mar;16(3):395-402, 2010. Published online Nov. 14, 2009.

¹ Peripheral blood stem cells are cells that can change into different types of cell. To collect enough of these cells for a transplant, a drug is given to the donor. This causes the stem cells to leave the bone marrow and enter the blood to be collected more easily.