

# Nearly Half of Black Patients With Metastatic Breast Cancer Are Not Informed About Clinical Trials

For immediate release

May 26, 2022

## Contact

Rachel Facci

571-483-1684

[mediateam@asco.org](mailto:mediateam@asco.org)

## ASCO Perspective

“These study findings reinforce the important role that health care teams have in boosting participation in clinical trials, particularly for Black patients living with metastatic breast cancer,” said ASCO Chief Medical Officer & Executive Vice President Julie R. Gralow, MD, FACP, FASCO.

*ALEXANDRIA, Va.* — A survey of metastatic breast cancer patients found that 83% of Black respondents were somewhat or very likely to consider clinical trial participation; however, 40% of those respondents reported that they had not been informed by their care team about the opportunity to enroll in a trial. The research will be presented at the 2022 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting.

## Study at a Glance

Focus	Understanding why Black patients with metastatic breast cancer do not enroll in clinical trials at rates equal to non-Black patients.
Population	A survey of 424 patients with metastatic breast cancer; 102 of them self-identified as Black.

Findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forty percent of Black survey respondents reported that their care team had not discussed clinical trial enrollment with them compared to 33% of non-Black respondents. Additionally, Black respondents: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Had a 90% trust and satisfaction level with their oncology care team and 83% were somewhat or very likely to consider trial participation.</li> <li>◦ Had concerns about side effects (73%) and effectiveness of treatments (63%).</li> <li>◦ Were more likely than non-Black respondents to believe unstudied treatments may be harmful (57% vs. 31%).</li> <li>◦ Were less likely than non-Black respondents to indicate they trust trials (73% vs. 91%) and trust that people of all races/ethnicities get fair treatment in trials (32% vs. 56%).</li> <li>◦ Were more likely than non-Black respondents to value receiving trial information from someone of the same racial/ethnic identity (67% vs. 10%), who had breast cancer (73% vs. 44%) or metastatic breast cancer (73% vs. 51%) or who had participated in a trial (72% vs. 48%).</li> <li>◦ Were more likely than non-Black respondents to be motivated to participate in clinical trials to ensure people with their racial or ethnic identity would benefit (83% vs. 51%).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Significance	<p>Black participation in clinical trials has been historically low compared to the rest of the population, limiting their opportunity to access new treatments. Clinical trial populations also need to reflect the diversity of the general population before oncologists can understand how a drug works across subpopulations. A better understanding of barriers and facilitators to participation allows for the identification of strategies to increase diversity in trials.</p>

Among U.S. racial/ethnic groups, Black people with breast cancer have the highest death rate and shortest survival. Approximately 15% of patients with cancer in the U.S. are Black, while only 4% to 6% of clinical trial participants are Black. It is estimated there were more than 168,000 women living with metastatic breast cancer in the U.S. in 2020 .

## Key Findings

This survey of metastatic breast cancer patients, which is part of the BECOME (**B**lack **E**xperience of **C**linical Trial and **O**pportunities for **M**eaningful **E**ngagement) initiative, showed that:

- Black respondent trust and satisfaction with their oncology care team was over 90% while 83% were somewhat or very likely to consider trial participation.
- Forty percent of Black respondents said that their care team had not discussed trial enrollment compared to 33% of non-Black respondents.
- One of the reasons Black respondents declined to participate in a trial was concerns about side effects (73%).
- Black respondents were more likely than non-Black respondents to be concerned that unstudied treatments may be harmful (57% vs. 31%).
- Black respondents were less likely than non-Black respondents to indicate they trust trials (73% vs. 91%) and trust that people of all races/ethnicities get fair treatment in trials (32% vs. 56%).
- Black respondents were more likely than non-Black respondents to value receiving trial information from someone of the same racial/ethnic identity (67% vs. 10%), who has had breast cancer (73% vs. 44%) or metastatic breast cancer (73% vs. 51%), or who has been in a trial (72% vs. 48%).
- Black respondents were more likely than non-Black respondents to be motivated to participate in clinical trials to ensure people with their racial or ethnic identity would benefit (83% vs. 51%).

“This study was initiated in 2019 and led by a very special and ardent advocate of inclusivity in breast cancer trial enrollment. Sadly, she passed away from metastatic breast cancer, but we all strive to continue her efforts by bringing the patient voice and authenticity of advocacy to our work so that we can demonstrate the impact that patients can have on the clinical trials process,” said lead author Stephanie Walker, RN, project lead on the BECOME initiative for the Metastatic Breast Cancer Alliance, a collective of cancer nonprofits, pharmaceutical and biotech industry members, and individual patient advocates, many of whom are living with metastatic breast cancer.

## About the Study

The researchers did a literature review of 34 articles related to Black patient participation in clinical trials. They also conducted 31 virtual interviews, including those patients who are living with metastatic breast cancer, are clinicians involved in breast cancer treatment, or are

hospital administrators and others, to identify relevant issues, concerns, motivations, barriers, and experiences in dealing with the disease. The messages from the literature review and the informant interviews were then used to inform the survey questions.

### **ASCO-ACCC Collaboration**

In 2020, ASCO and the Association of Community Cancer Centers (ACCC) launched a collaboration to increase the diversity of racial and ethnic populations in cancer treatment trials. A key component of this initiative included testing a research site self-assessment tool and implicit bias training program that are designed to address one of the greatest barriers to people participating in clinical trials: trials are not routinely being offered by clinicians to eligible patients. With the pilot testing involving more than 70 research sites across the United States now completed, the assessment and training will be made available for free public access in the summer of 2022.

As part of this collaboration, ASCO and ACCC recently [issued recommendations](#), published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, detailing specific actions that would engage the entire cancer clinical trial ecosystem in expanding the participation of underrepresented individuals in research that advances progress against cancer.

### **Next Steps**

The survey respondents tended to be highly educated (over 80% of respondents held an advanced degree) with high socioeconomic status (about half of respondents had annual household incomes of \$50,000 or higher) and access to social media. Patients not connected to social media, or those who received their care in community cancer centers, were not well represented in the survey, factors which the investigators hope to address in future studies.

Members of the BECOME initiative will meet with other groups who have recently performed surveys focused on Black patients with metastatic breast cancer to share results and identify strategies for improved care.

The investigators hope to incorporate steps into the clinical trial enrollment processes to increase Black patient participation, including:

- Enhancing clinical trial awareness about trials by informing patients, increasing education,

training healthcare providers to deliver patient-friendly information in an unbiased manner and providing messaging from people of shared racial/ethnic identities and health experiences.

- Building trust through clear communication.
- Addressing concerns about side effects, effectiveness, harm, and fair treatment.
- Helping patients find and access trials.

This study received funding from the Metastatic Breast Cancer Alliance.

[View the full abstract](#)

**View the author disclosures:**<https://coi.asco.org/Report/ViewAbstractCOI?id=371944>

**View the disclosures for ASCO's Cancer Communications Committee:**

<https://www.asco.org/sites/new-www.asco.org/files/content-files/about-asco/pdf/2022-asco-ccc-disclosures.pdf>

**View the disclosures for Dr. Vokes:**<https://coi.asco.org/share/4SR-2FFX/Everett%20Vokes>

**For your readers:**

- [Guide to Metastatic Breast Cancer](#)
- [Finding a Clinical Trial](#)
- [Cancer Does Not Affect All People Equally: An Expert Q&A on Cancer Disparities and Health Equity](#)
- [What Are Social Determinants of Health and How Do They Affect People With Cancer?](#)
- [Cancer.Net Blog Post in Spanish](#)

**ATTRIBUTION TO THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CLINICAL ONCOLOGY ANNUAL MEETING IS REQUESTED IN ALL COVERAGE.**

###

---

Breast Cancer Facts & Figures 2019-2020: <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/research/cancer-facts-and-statistics/breast-cancer-facts-and-figures/breast-cancer-facts-and-figures-2019-2020.pdf>.

## **About ASCO:**

Founded in 1964, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, Inc. (ASCO®) is committed to the principle that knowledge conquers cancer. Together with the Association for Clinical Oncology, ASCO represents nearly 45,000 oncology professionals who care for people living with cancer. Through research, education, and promotion of high quality, equitable patient care, ASCO works to conquer cancer and create a world where cancer is prevented or cured, and every survivor is healthy. Conquer Cancer, the ASCO Foundation, supports ASCO by funding groundbreaking research and education across cancer's full continuum. ASCO is supported by its affiliate organization, the Conquer Cancer Foundation. Learn more at [www.ASCO.org](http://www.ASCO.org), explore patient education resources at [www.Cancer.Net](http://www.Cancer.Net), and follow us on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

---