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Lupus: What We Know and What's Next

This guide explores the current understanding of lupus, its challenges, and the critical need for more Black recruitment in research and clinical trials.





Let's Talk About Lupus

Lupus is no joke. It's a **chronic autoimmune disease**, meaning your body's immune system, which is supposed to protect you, **starts attacking healthy tissues and organs instead**. It can do some real damage to your **skin, joints, kidneys, heart, and even your brain**—and the symptoms? They're all over the place and hit everyone differently.

Why is Lupus So Complicated?

First off, lupus is **hard to diagnose**. The symptoms mimic a bunch of other illnesses, so it takes an average of five years for most people to finally get a proper diagnosis.

Lupus Hits Black People Harder

Here's the thing—

Lupus doesn't play fair

Black women are more likely to be diagnosed at a younger age and deal with more severe symptoms than other groups. Although lupus is less common in men than in women, Black men with lupus tend to have a higher risk of having multiple organs be affected through kidney disease, cardiovascular complications, and other diseases compared to other groups. They may also face delayed diagnosis due to the misconception that lupus primarily affects women, which can lead to untreated symptoms and disease progression. That's why lupus is such an important issue for us and our communities.



What Causes Lupus?

We don't have all the answers yet, but here's what we do know:



It's in the Genes

Lupus tends to run in families, especially in Black families. No single gene causes it, but if you've got a family history of lupus, your risk is higher.



Environmental Factors

Things like infections, sunlight (yes, U.V. rays!), stress, and even some medications can wake up lupus in people who are already at risk.

What's the Latest on Lupus Research?

Researchers are working hard to figure out lupus, improve treatments, and tackle the health disparities we face.

Here's what's happening:

Clinical Trials

Black folks are often left out of clinical trials, but researchers are working to change that. They're studying how lupus affects different backgrounds so treatments can **work for everyone**.

Better Treatments

New medications, like biologic therapies, are making it easier to manage lupus. The goal is fewer flares, less inflammation, and more remission.

Closing the Care Gap

Black people often have the worst outcomes and the least access to quality care. Researchers are pushing to change that by increasing clinical trial diversity, improving healthcare quality for all lupus patients, uncovering and addressing the underlying causes of racial and ethnic disparities in lupus outcomes, launching national health education programs on lupus, and increasing provider education in rural areas.



Early Awareness is Key

The sooner you know about lupus, the better you can manage it. Since lupus symptoms often look like other diseases, **it's important to catch the signs early and get help**. A timely diagnoses can make a world of difference.

Here's What You Can Do

- 1 If you've got unexplained fatigue, joint pain, or weird skin rashes, talk to your doctor.
- 2 Got a family history of lupus? Bring it up.
- 3 Stay up-to-date about new treatments and research.

Take care of yourself and stay on top of your health. The more we talk about lupus, the more we push for better care and treatments for Black individuals.

We deserve it.

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