

# The Doctor Never Listens: Older African American Men's Perceptions of Patient-Provider Communication



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# Snapshot: African American Men's Health Disparities

- **14 times more likely to develop kidney failure due to hypertension (ages 30-39)**
- 24.2 billion in excess health care costs attributable to health disparities
- 30% higher mortality from cardiovascular disease
- 60% higher mortality from stroke
- Twice the mortality for diabetes and related complications

# Poor Healthcare Communication Can Lead to Health Disparities

**“Doctors tend to dominate conversations with African-American patients, pay less attention to their personal and psychosocial needs and make patients feel less involved in making decisions about their health.”**

Cooper, L. A., Roter, D. L., Carson, K. A., Beach, M. C., Sabin, J. A., Greenwald, A. G., & Inui, T. S. (2012). The associations of clinicians' implicit attitudes about race with medical visit communication and patient ratings of interpersonal care. *American journal of public health, 102*(5), 979-987

# What Do African American Men Need? Patient-Centered Communication

## Communication that:

- Prioritizes the patient perspective, values, needs, and preferences:

## ➤ **Primary functions:**

- Information exchange
- Responding to emotions
- Managing uncertainty
- Fostering relationships
- Making decisions
- Enabling self-management

## Results in:

- Greater patient understanding & satisfaction
- Increased patient trust, access to care, involvement
- Less suffering, improved pain control & family social support
- Improved functional ability & survival

# Research Question

What factors are associated with older African American men feeling as if their doctor never listens to them in the context of doctor-patient communication during medical visits ?



# Methods

- **Sample:** Baseline patient survey for 1,666 older African American men enrolled in Medicare, 85% sampled from Henry Ford Health System in Southeast Michigan.

Demographic profile	(%) N=1,666
Age	73.6 (46% over age 75)
Some college or higher education	31%
Married	45.4%
Lives alone	37.6%
Income <\$20,000	33.3%

**Table 1. Main Variable Comparisons by Patient Physician Communication (n=1666)**

		Problems with Communication (n=1336)	No Problems with Communication (n=330)	P-Value
<b>Education</b>				0.03
	High School or Less	938 (70%)	214 (65%)	
	Some College or More	396 (30%)	116 (35%)	
<b>Age</b>				0.00
	Under 75	682 (51%)	214 (65%)	
	75 and Older	654 (49%)	116 (35%)	
<b>Income</b>				0.00
	Greater than 20K	931 (70%)	180 (55%)	
	20K or Less	405 (30%)	150 (45%)	
<b>Marital Status</b>				0.00
	Single	671 (50%)	239 (72%)	
	Married/Partnered	665 (50%)	91 (28%)	
<b>Self-care</b>				0.01
	No Problems with Self Care	1219 (91%)	287 (87%)	
	Some Problems/Unable to Care for Self	117 (9%)	43 (13%)	
<b>Pain/Discomfort</b>				0.00
	No Pain	705 (53%)	141 (43%)	
	Moderate/Extreme Pain or Discomfort	631 (47%)	189(57%)	
<b>Emotional Wellbeing</b>				0.00
	Not Downhearted/Blue	281 (21%)	138 (42%)	
	Downhearted/Blue Most of the Time	1055 (79%)	192 (58%)	
<b>Trouble with Mobility</b>				0.00
	Not Limited at All	927 (69%)	186 (56%)	
	Limited Moderate Activity	409 (31%)	144 (44%)	
<b>Problems with Getting Health Care</b>				0.00
	Not a problem	34 (3%)	91 (28%)	
	Big Problem	1302 (97%)	239 (72%)	

**Table 2. Predictors of Problems with Patient Provider Communication**

	OR	95% CI
<b>Education</b>		
High School or Less	0.853	(0.638, 1.14)
<b>Age</b>		
75 and Older	1.476**	(0.608, 1.102)
<b>Income</b>		
20K or Less	0.819	(0.608, 1.102)
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married/Partnered	1.918***	(1.407, 2.614)
<b>Self Care</b>		
Some Problems/Unable to Care for Self	0.903	(0.585, 1.394)
<b>Pain/Discomfort</b>		
Moderate/Extreme Pain or Discomfort	0.849	(0.638, 1.131)
<b>Emotional Wellbeing</b>		
Downhearted/Blue Most of the Time	1.930***	(1.449, 2.572)
<b>Trouble with Mobility</b>		
Limited Moderate Activity	1.318*	(0.980, 1.772)
<b>Problems with Getting Health Care</b>		
Big Problem	12.146***	(7.874, 18.738)

\*= $p > .1$  \*\*= $p > .05$  \*\*\*= $p > .001$

# Snapshot of Findings & Discussion

**African American men who report their “doctor never listens” are:**

- Men who may already be at risk of being medically underserved
- those age 75 or older
- Men with depressive symptoms
- Men facing significant difficulty accessing the health care system



## **Limitations:**

- Utilized baseline cross-sectional data (non-representative)
- Limited measures available to assess of patient-provider communication
- Geographic homogeneity

## **Strengths**

- Large sample of understudied African American men
- Highlights underexplored interaction between mental health and medical interactions for this population
- Provides a starting point for additional gender and disease specific investigations

# Next Steps & Relevance to NIDDK Priorities

- **Studies currently underway to investigate older African American men's experiences related to:**
  - Active participation behaviors (question-asking, assertiveness etc.)
  - Perceived barriers to & companion involvement in doctor-patient communication
- **NIDDK Relevance:**
  - Assessing the role of clinical and community-based program communication with older African American men to manage Type 2 diabetes
  - We are interested in exploring disparities in communication/messaging about end-stage renal disease, dialysis, and kidney transplants with at-risk African American men
  - Specific focus on racial/ethnic minority males and communication as a means of health promotion/prevention

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