Not a Death Sentence: Perspectives of African American Women Living With Lung Cancer

Lisa A. Webb, MSN, RN, CEN®, and Karen Kane McDonnell, PhD, RN, OCN®

Lung cancer is the second leading type of cancer among adults and accounts for 25% of all cancer deaths in the United States (American Cancer Society, 2017). In 2017, an estimated 225,000 new cases of lung cancer were diagnosed in the United States, and 155,000 people died as a result of that diagnosis (American Cancer Society, 2017). These lung cancer incidence and mortality rates are startling. Even more disconcerting are the health disparities experienced by African Americans diagnosed with lung cancer. Although early detection, screening practices, and improved treatment help increase survival rates, the overall five-year survival rate of African American patients with lung cancer (14%) is lower than that of Caucasian patients (18%) (American Cancer Society, 2016a). When cancer is diagnosed prior to metastasis, the disparity is even greater, with the five-year survival rates increasing to 47% for African Americans and 55% for Caucasians, respectively (American Cancer Society, 2016b; de Moor et al., 2013). Despite this notable disparity, knowledge is limited regarding the survivorship of African Americans, particularly African American women, with lung cancer. Healthcare professionals should provide culturally tailored communication and support for female African American lung cancer survivors. Additional research is needed to inform the development of interventions focused on health behavior change to enhance lung cancer survivorship in this vulnerable and understudied group.

KEYWORDS  
African American women; lung cancer survivorship; focus groups

ONF, 45(1), 46-54.

DOI 10.1188/18.ONF.46-54