African American Health Disparities in Lung Cancer

Pauline M. Green, PhD, RN, CNE, Suzy Guerrier-Adams, MSN, Priscilla Okunji, PhD, RN-BC, Deborah Schiavone, PhD, RN, PMHCNS-BC, CNE, and Joann E. Smith, PhD, RN, APHN-BC, CNE

Lung cancer is a leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States and globally. African Americans experience significant differences in lung cancer incidence and mortality. Smoking is the single greatest risk for lung cancer, making smoking cessation programs a potentially fruitful approach for reducing the risk of lung cancer. Despite clinical practice guidelines that prompt nurses to advise patients to quit smoking, only a small percentage of nurses do so. Minority patients are less likely than Whites to receive smoking cessation advice. This article discusses recent findings on the pathophysiology and risks for lung cancer. The literature on smoking cessation research is examined to determine the features of successful cessation interventions. Recommendations are offered for enhancing tobacco cessation efforts in nursing practice, education, and research.

Background

African Americans have a higher incidence of lung cancer (76.1 per 100,000) compared to Whites (69.7 per 100,000) (CDC, 2010a). African Americans are more susceptible to smoking-induced lung cancer (Mechanic et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2006) and have less access to healthcare services than do Whites (CDC, 2011c). Research using national data demonstrated racial and