

Novartis commits to addressing racial disparities in breast cancer screening, treatment and care

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- Black women with breast cancer are approximately 40% more likely to die compared to white women with breast cancer in the U.S.[1] - and are also more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage with more aggressive disease[2]
- Novartis will enlist multidisciplinary experts in breast cancer and health policy to identify the most pressing issues facing Black women in breast cancer and collaborate to build solutions
- With breast cancer surpassing lung cancer as the world's most commonly diagnosed cancer[3] and screenings drastically down due to COVID-19[4,5], now is the time to act
- More Than Just Words reflects the longstanding Novartis commitment to improving lives of patients with breast cancer

EAST HANOVER, N.J., May 26, 2021 -- Novartis today announced the launch of More Than Just Words, a multiyear commitment to promote health equity in breast cancer care, where there is significant unmet need. Black women under the age of 35 are diagnosed with breast cancer at twice the rate of white women the same age⁶. During 2020, breast cancer became the most commonly diagnosed cancer worldwide, while at the same time, breast cancer screenings overall have decreased drastically^{3,4}. With COVID-19 and breast cancer disproportionately impacting women of color and drops in screenings threatening timely diagnoses and cancer care, it is more urgent than ever to address the disparities in breast cancer for Black women^{7,8}. Novartis will collaborate with leading multidisciplinary experts to raise awareness and create solutions that drive health equity across the continuum of breast cancer care and urge women to get the screening or care they need as soon as possible.

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"Our commitment to reimagining medicine at Novartis goes beyond developing therapeutics to helping close historical gaps in treatment and care of underserved communities," said Marion Brooks, Vice President and US Country Head, Diversity and Inclusion, Novartis. "Knowing that Black women have a higher incidence of or are at a greater risk for certain diseases, like breast cancer, we must work with other organizations to move forward together to successfully address health equity and access issues. We are at a critical juncture where we can change the course of diagnosis and care for all women."

Novartis is committed to creating solutions and funding programs to improve breast cancer care for Black women. Learn how you can help close this serious gap and connect to resources by visiting www.MoreThanJustWords.US.

Hear from More Than Just Words Advisors

"Every day I see the impact of delayed screenings and checkups due to COVID-19, including more advanced diagnoses," said Monique Gary, DO, MSc, FACS, Medical Director of the Grand View Health Cancer Program and More Than Just Words Advisor. "Unfortunately, Black women already experience later detection and delayed diagnoses, resulting in fewer care options and harder-to-treat disease for our patients. It is critical to act now to broaden awareness and change these statistics, because they represent more than just data: they are our mothers, daughters, sisters, partners and spouses, our friends."

"Personally and professionally, I commit to addressing the systemic and racial biases Black women with breast cancer face every day," said Jamil Rivers, Founder and CEO, The Chrysalis Initiative, Board President, METAvivor Research and Support, Inc., metastatic breast cancer patient and More Than Just Words Advisor. "I am frustrated by our current reality, but remain hopeful that together we can identify and support measurable change through this initiative."

"There is a great need to address the devastating reality that Black women often do not receive the same quality of breast cancer care as other women. On the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and the spotlight on inequities being experienced by communities of color in the United States, we are calling for a collective commitment to demand better for the Black breast cancer community," said Ricki Fairley, Co-founder and CEO of TOUCH, The Black Breast Cancer Alliance and More Than Just Words Advisor. "Convening experts to amplify the issues regarding Black breast cancer and devise a plan of action – as Novartis has – is instrumental to addressing the systemic issues that lead to health disparities."

About Social Determinants of Health and Disparities in Breast Cancer

The social, economic and physical conditions – in places where people live, learn, work and play – that influence health outcomes of people are what the CDC defines as social determinants of health⁹. When health outcomes are better or worse from one population to the next, there is disparity. Health disparities have impacts reaching far beyond those directly affected by limiting advancements in care and result in avoidable costs¹⁰. For example, the American Public Health Association found racial disparities in health led to an estimated \$93 billion in excess medical care costs and \$42 billion in lost productivity¹¹.

Black women are approximately 40% more likely to die of breast cancer and have a higher incidence of early-age onset breast cancer before age 50¹. Further, since 1990, breast cancer death rates only decreased by 26% in Black women in contrast to 40% in white women, underscoring the urgency of the disparity¹². Implicit biases and underrepresentation of Black providers, who comprise only ~2% of practicing oncologists, contribute to communication barriers and access to quality, consistent, culturally-competent care¹³.

About Novartis in Breast Cancer

Novartis tackles breast cancer with superior science, collaboration and a passion for transforming patient care. We've taken a bold approach to our research by including patient populations often neglected in clinical trials, identifying new pathways or mutations that may play a role in disease progression and developing therapies that not only maintain, but also improve, quality of life for patients. Our priority over the past 30 years and today is to deliver treatments proven to improve and extend lives for those diagnosed with advanced breast cancer.

About Novartis

Located in East Hanover, NJ Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation – an affiliate of Novartis – is reimagining medicine to improve and extend people's lives. As a leading global medicines company, we use innovative science and digital technologies to create transformative treatments in areas of great medical need. In our quest to find new medicines, we consistently rank among the world's top companies investing in research and development. Novartis employs nearly 16,000 people in the United States. For more information, please visit <https://www.novartis.us>.

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