



# SHINING A LIGHT ON DEPRESSION AMONG AFRICAN AMERICAN STROKE SURVIVORS

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Carolinas Rehabilitation



Carolinas HealthCare System

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## A FIRST STUDY ON AN UNDERSERVED POPULATION OPENS NEW PATHS TO IMPROVED OUTCOMES

Strokes tend to hit African Americans harder than other groups. Compared with Caucasians, they have greater functional impairment on admission to rehabilitation facilities and experience more physical limitations post-rehabilitation.

Whether African Americans are also disproportionately impacted by poststroke depression (PSD) has been unclear. But thanks to a recent multicenter study conducted at Carolinas Rehabilitation in close collaboration with Duke University School of Nursing, there is now a better understanding of the prevalence of PSD among African Americans and its effect on recovery.

Published in the *Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease*, this first study of depression and function among African American stroke survivors who received inpatient rehabilitation in the United States, revealed that 15 percent of African Americans who received rehabilitation after a stroke had documented PSD. This is lower than the estimated one-third of the general stroke survivor population. Previous estimates for African Americans ranged from 10 percent to 44 percent.

The reason for this relatively lower rate could be culture.

"African Americans typically have better family support," explains Vu Q.C. Nguyen, MD, director of the Stroke

Program at Carolinas Rehabilitation and an author of the study. "They tend to have a more extended support group, such as their neighborhood community or church, which can help patients better cope with the aftereffects of a stroke," Dr. Nguyen says.

### RESEARCH HIGHLIGHT

Depression and Functional Status Among African American Stroke Survivors in Inpatient Rehabilitation *Journal of Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease*, January 2017

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Among the 458 African American stroke patients included in the study, there was no significant association found between depression and functional status at discharge.

However, African Americans with PSD were more functionally impaired at discharge than those without depression, supporting the need for health professionals to regularly assess patients for depression throughout recovery.

"The study does more than fill knowledge gaps around PSD and functional recovery to create a foundation for better care," Dr. Nguyen says. "It also highlights patients who have been overlooked in the past."

"Carolinas Rehabilitation is committed to pursue research on patient populations that have been historically underserved and underrepresented," says Dr. Nguyen. "This study's focus on African Americans is just one example of how we are broadening our approach to improve care for everyone."



To learn more about this study, contact Dr. Nguyen:

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