

# Cancer Prevention

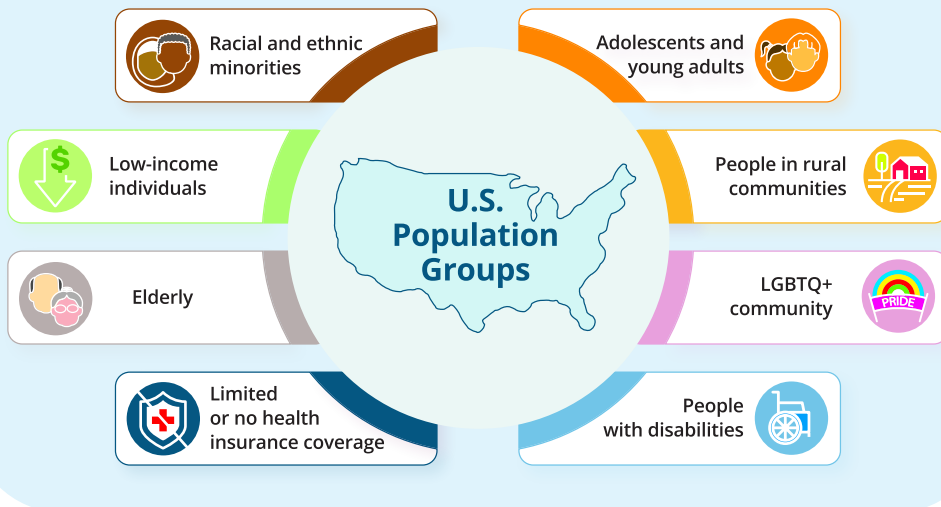
# T.A.L.K.

Teach, Advocate, Listen & Know

APRIL 2024

## Cancer affects everyone. it doesn't affect everyone equally.

### What is a cancer health disparity?



Chances are you know someone who has been impacted by cancer. That impact can be different depending on someone's socioeconomic status (e.g., education, income, household structure, home value, household facilities, poverty, and employment) and race. They may experience differences in the quality and access to cancer screening and care. This is known as cancer health disparities.

Cancer health disparities exist across the United States, and even in our backyards here in Western Pennsylvania. We are working to eliminate the differences in access to cancer care—from screening and diagnosis to treatment and life after cancer. One way we are doing this is by educating and bringing awareness about cancer health disparities to all community members.

In this edition of Cancer Prevention TALK, I am pleased to introduce you to two UPMC Hillman Cancer Center researchers, who are working to help understand and eliminate cancer health disparities. The first, Dr. Meghan Tipton, is an epidemiologist and program director of evaluation in our Office of Community Outreach and Engagement. Her work is essential to identifying and understanding cancer rates and health outcomes across different population groups in Western Pennsylvania. The second, Dr. Steffi Oesterreich, is an internationally known breast cancer researcher working to help find ways to reduce health disparities for breast cancer patients. I hope you will enjoy learning more about their work as much as I did!

*Susan Radio*

The Office of Community Outreach and Engagement at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center is actively working to identify and eliminate cancer health disparities so everyone can one day live a life without cancer.

**PROGRAM DIRECTOR:** Susan Radio

Subscribe to this newsletter, connect with us for an upcoming event, or learn more about cancer research, screenings, and our other services:

**PHONE:** 412-647-1809

**EMAIL:** HCC-COE@upmc.edu

**WEBSITE:** hillmanresearch.upmc.edu/coe



### What's Inside

- Research Highlight: Understanding Breast Cancer Health Disparities in Western Pa.
- Upcoming Events
- Crossword Puzzle
- Recipe of the Month



As the director of evaluation for the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) at the UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, my goal is to measure the success of COE's efforts to reduce cancer burden in our catchment community (communities that an organization serves). The catchment community for the cancer center includes 29 counties in Western Pennsylvania.

At the cancer center, we are committed to serving the needs of people in Western Pennsylvania, sharing those needs with cancer center leaders, and supporting research and clinical care that addresses these needs. Measuring our success (evaluation) plays a vital role in making that happen.

As part of evaluation, we gather data (a collection of individual facts or statistics) from many sources such as local and state departments of health, the United States Census Bureau, surveys of community members conducted by our office, and discussions with community partners and stakeholders to get a complete picture of the cancer burden in our population. For example, we examined data on new cancer cases and cancer-related deaths for the last 20 years with data from the state to identify the top five most

common cancer types in our region. We found that breast, lung, colorectal, cervical, and prostate cancers had the highest rates of new cancer cases and deaths. These cancer types also had some of the highest disparities by race and ethnicity, geography (urban vs. rural), and income. Therefore, these five cancers are top priorities for the cancer center.

A major part of our success is the communication between our office and our community. We do this by communicating the cancer needs, priorities, accomplishments, and future goals in our monthly newsletter. You can sign up to receive the newsletter by contacting 412-647-1809 or visiting our website at [hillmanresearch.upmc.edu/coe](http://hillmanresearch.upmc.edu/coe).

Sincerely,  
**Meghan Tipre, DrPH, MSPH**

## Research Spotlight

### Understanding Breast Cancer Health Disparities in Western Pennsylvania

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center researchers are working to improve the treatment of cancer for individuals from all population groups. We had the chance to sit down with one researcher, Dr. Steffi Oesterreich, to explain what she and her colleagues are doing to improve the treatment of breast cancer patients in Western Pennsylvania. Dr. Oesterreich explained that she was part of a team of researchers who showed that the treatment of breast cancer patients in Western Pennsylvania differed by patients' race and socioeconomic status. Socioeconomic status is complicated to define but includes factors such as a person's education, income, household structure, home value, household facilities, poverty, and employment. Low socioeconomic status was associated with Black race in the study population of patients with metastatic breast cancer. Metastatic breast cancer is cancer that has spread from the breast to another part of the body.

There were three main points learned from the study that Dr. Oesterreich shared with us. The first was that socioeconomic status does contribute to the overall survival among patients with breast cancer. Patients from low socioeconomic groups received a different type of hormonal treatment than those from higher socioeconomic groups and, overall, their outcome was worse. Second, a person's socioeconomic status was a stronger predictor of the person's survival than race. The third finding was that there are disparities in breast cancer treatment patterns between socioeconomic status and racial groups. Low socioeconomic status and those who are Black/African American received fewer cycles of chemotherapy.

Hillman researchers are working on further studies to understand how treatment and outcomes of breast cancer patients from rural areas

compares to those from urban areas. Another health disparity the breast cancer team is tackling is related to aging, a problem in Western Pennsylvania with large numbers of elderly patients with breast cancer.

The African American Self-Help Cancer Support Group was launched in 1994 to serve as an empowerment tool for African Americans diagnosed with cancer and their support systems (families, friends, and caregivers). It provides support and resources for all members to share their common experiences.

If you are interested in learning more about the group or to join, please contact us at 412-647-1809.



Dr. Steffi Oesterreich presenting to the African American Self-Help Cancer Support Group, Feb. 2024.

# Save the Date!

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS FROM UPMC HILLMAN CANCER CENTER:



**RUSH TO CRUSH  
CANCER**  
Benefitting UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

**MAY 19:**

**Rush to Crush Cancer is a community-based cycling event** that raises vital funds for cancer research. 100% of participant-raised dollars from the event goes to UPMC Hillman Cancer Center. Team up with your family, friends, and coworkers and help us achieve the extraordinary: life without cancer! Learn more at [RushToCrushCancer.org](http://RushToCrushCancer.org).



**JUNE 19:**

**Hit men's health out of the park!** Join us at the UPMC Health Plan Neighborhood Center (East Liberty) from 3:00pm – 6:00pm. We'll be offering health educational materials, free health screenings, food, and more.

# Want to Schedule an Event with Us?

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center's **Office of Community Outreach and Engagement** works to educate community members on cancer prevention, screening, and treatment by coordinating with community leaders, schools, researchers, and more through a variety of programs and events.

What we offer:

- Cancer screening information
- *Healthy Choices for Students* programming for schools
- Informal classes and seminars for cancer awareness
- Informational displays at your next walk or event

To invite us to your next event, contact us:

**EMAIL:** [HCC-COE@upmc.edu](mailto:HCC-COE@upmc.edu)

**PHONE:** 412-647-1809

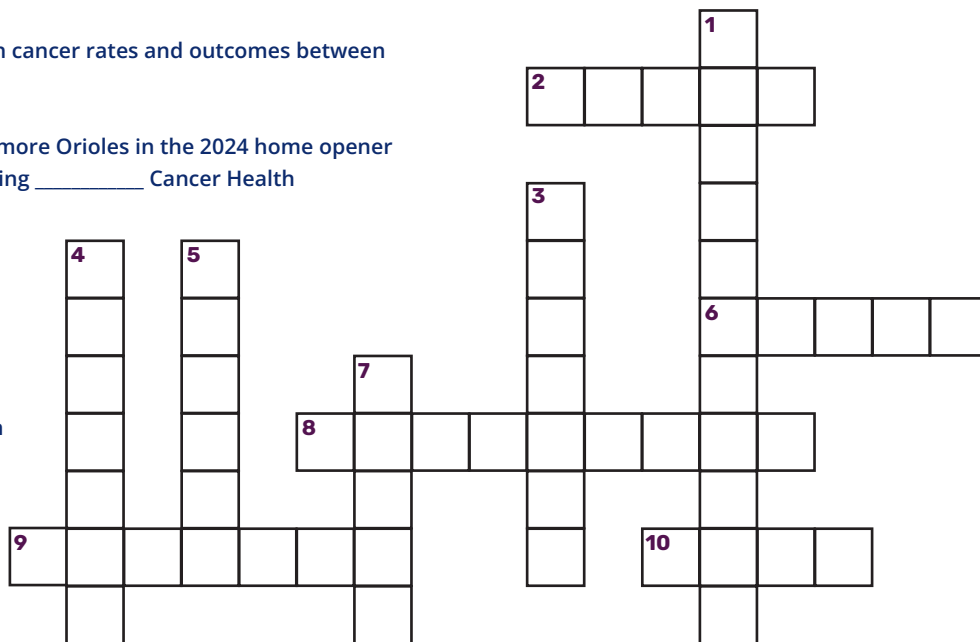
# April Puzzle

## Down

1. Cancer health disparities are \_\_\_\_\_ in cancer rates and outcomes between different population groups
3. April \_\_\_\_\_ bring May flowers
4. The Pittsburgh \_\_\_\_\_ face the Baltimore Orioles in the 2024 home opener
5. This newsletter highlighted "Understanding \_\_\_\_\_ Cancer Health Disparities in Western PA"
7. File your \_\_\_\_\_ by April 15

## Across

2. This month is Minority Health Awareness Month
6. People in these types of communities can face cancer health disparities
8. This is a great activity to do outside that will get your hands dirty
9. April is a great time to plant this leafy green vegetable
10. April is Oral, Head and \_\_\_\_\_ (body part that supports the head) Cancer Awareness Month



## Answers

**DOWN** 1. Differences, 3. Showers, 4. Pirates, 5. Breast, 7. Taxes  
**ACROSS** 2. April, 6. Rural, 8. Garden, 9. Lettuce, 10. Neck

**Office of Community Outreach and Engagement**

UPMC Hillman Cancer Center  
5150 Centre Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15232

## Recipe of the month Strawberry Aguas Frescas

**Total time: 10 minutes**

Recipe courtesy of American Institute for Cancer Research, [aicr.org](http://aicr.org)



### Nutritional Information

Makes 2 servings  
Serving size: 1 1/4 cup

#### Each serving provides:

Calories (per serving): 60  
Total fat: 5g  
Saturated fat: 0g, Trans fat: 0g  
Cholesterol: 0mg  
Sodium: 0mg  
Carbohydrates: 16g  
Dietary fiber: 3g  
Protein: 1g  
Sugar: 9g, Added sugar: 0g

### Ingredients

- 2 cups sliced, fresh strawberries
- 2 cups water
- 2 limes, squeeze until all juice is in the container
- 1 teaspoon agave nectar (optional, you can also substitute this for honey, maple syrup and molasses)
- Ice cubes
- Optional garnishes: More strawberries, fresh mint leaves

### Directions

1. Place strawberries, water, lime juice and agave nectar (if using) in the container of a blender. Process a few seconds until smooth.
2. Fill 2 large glasses or a small pitcher with ice cubes. Pour aguas frescas into glasses or the entire batch into pitcher.
3. Garnish with fresh, whole strawberries and mint leaves, if desired.