

Ethnics face more end-life costs

CHICAGO (AP) — Striking new research shows dying Blacks and Hispanics have much steeper treatment costs than Whites, sobering evidence that racial healthcare differences continue right up until death.

It's not that minorities are being charged more than Whites. It's that they tend to get more costly, intensive treatments including feeding tubes and other invasive medical procedures near death. That's in sharp contrast with what often happens throughout their lives, when minorities are less likely than Whites to get aggressive medical care.

The results raise a troubling question about whether medical resources for non-White patients are

"misallocated over a lifetime," with minorities receiving more treatment at the end, when there is little chance of improving or extending life, the study authors said.

The study appears in Monday's Archives of Internal Medicine. It involved nearly 160,000 Medicare patients and records on their treatment in the last six months of life. It is the most comprehensive on the topic and confirms results suggested in smaller studies on disparities in end-of-life care, said co-author Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel, a researcher in the bioethics department at the National Institutes of Health.

Medicare costs in those final months averaged \$20,166 for Whites. Among

Blacks, they were \$26,704, about 30 percent higher; and among Hispanics, \$31,702 or almost 60 percent higher. Those individual cost differences can add up to billions of dollars on a national scale, Emanuel said.

Reasons why minorities receive more costly end-of-life care are unclear; the study had no data to explain that. But Emanuel and other doctors offered theories.

"Some of it may be preference. Some of it may be fear-based," Emanuel said.

Distrust of doctors and suspicions about getting less attentive treatment than Whites likely is another factor, the study authors said.

Also, because of cultural or spiritual beliefs, some minorities are more likely to

hold out hope for a miraculous recovery, or to oppose letting doctors play God and hasten death by abandoning treatment, said Dr. Elbert Huang, a Chinese-American physician with the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Letting doctors withdraw aggressive end-of-life treatment is a western European approach, Huang said. In a smaller, earlier study of healthy elderly patients in Rochester, N.Y., Dr. William Bayer said he found Blacks were more likely than Whites to say they would favor aggressive treatment even after brain death.

Blacks in that study tended to believe that "if God wants to take our lives, he will decide when and where that will happen," Bayer said.

O.J. Simpson

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ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ron Goldman, in Los Angeles. But Christine Prody and Simpson are no longer a couple, Simpson's daughter and friends said. Simpson was found liable for the deaths in a Los Angeles civil lawsuit and was ordered to pay \$33.5 million in compensatory and punitive damages to the Goldman and Nicole Brown Simpson estates. Barrett Prody said his 33-year-old sister, who lives in Fergus Falls, Minn., had no connection with the fundraising effort.

Barrett Prody, who runs an automobile marketing company in North Dakota, said he talks several times a week by telephone with Simpson, who is serving nine to 33 years at Lovelock State Prison in northern Nevada after being convicted of leading five other men into a Las Vegas hotel room to retrieve what he said were personal items and family mementos from two sports collectibles dealers. Simpson and co-defendant Clarence "C.J." Stewart were convicted on all 12 charges, and Stewart was sentenced to 7 1/2 years to 27 years. The four other men who accompanied Simpson were sentenced to probation after they took plea deals and testified for the prosecution.

Prody's website blames the hotel room confrontation on Thomas Riccio, the memorabilia dealer who arranged the meeting, and criticizes prosecutors and Judge Jackie Glass for their handling of the case.

Tax

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law — saying citizens there have had trouble because of what they call burdensome requirements.

"The results so far show that people who are citizens but were unable to produce the right documentation lost the right to vote. I mean that's what the result is," said Larry Frankel, a Washington-based attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union. "It isn't as if people who are in an illegal status are rushing to the polls to vote because that's a good way of getting

caught."

Secretary of State Karen Handel, a Republican whose office oversees elections, has aggressively lobbied for the measure.

Spokesman Matt Carrothers said the Secretary of State's Office sent 4,771 advisory letters before last year's general election to residents who attempted to register to vote but whose status was "flagged" because of a question about their immigration status. Of those, 2,718 never responded or provided proof of citizen-

ship.

All told, he said 599 residents cast a "challenged" ballot due to questions about their citizenship, and 230 failed to provide proper documentation before election results were certified.

The vote on two similar bills broke pretty much along party lines in both houses of the Georgia Legislature, with Republicans supporting it and Democrats against it. Once the chambers hash out minor differences, the bill would go to Republican Gov. Sonny Perdue. The governor has not said whether he would sign it.

The law would take effect next year, and people already registered to vote would not have to prove citizenship as long as they remain on voter rolls. It would have to be approved by the U.S. Justice Department.

Georgia is still bound by the provisions of the 1965

Voting Rights Act that requires all or parts of 16 states with a history of racial discrimination, most in the South, to get approval from the U.S. Department of Justice before implementing any changes in the way elections are held.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund in 2006 filed a lawsuit challenging Arizona's law, which had been approved by ballot initiative in 2004. Last year, the organization appealed a judge's decision upholding the law, and the case is now pending in a federal appeals court.

The defense fund contends the Arizona measure violates federal law and has caused a drop in voter registration and that Georgia's law would do the same if it passes.

Michael Kang, a law professor at Emory University who specializes in voting is-

sues, said it's hard to tell what an Obama Justice Department will decide on Georgia's law. Citizenship is not a constitutional requirement for voting, he said, but courts have tended to allow states to limit the vote to citizens.

"The question here is whether the procedural requirement kind of goes beyond a tailored approach and ends up disenfranchising or discouraging participation by actual citizens who just simply can't comply with the procedural burden," Kang said.

He said the Justice Department could find that the procedural burden is too great because people could have to pay to get a copy of their birth certificate or other document proving citizenship and would effectively be

barred from voting if they couldn't afford to get those documents.

Carrothers, of the Secretary of State's Office, said similar arguments were made by critics of a Georgia law — in effect during the 2008 election — requiring voters to present a photo ID when voting in person. He pointed out that voter turnout increased for last year's election when the law was in effect.

"To use the photo ID law as an example, the critics, for all their lawsuits and all their rhetoric, still could not provide someone who was unable to vote because of the photo ID legislation," he said. "Requiring proof of citizenship should have little to no impact on those who legally want to participate in our elections."

Fight

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26, captured his first world title on February 3, 2007 by dethroning previously undefeated WBC light heavyweight champion Tomasz Adamek. It remains the only loss on the new IBF cruiserweight champion's resume. Dawson successfully defended his title three times over the next 14 months, the third against former world champion and 2004 Fighter of the Year Glen Johnson before vacating the title to challenge Tarver.


"Winning my first world title was a career highlight, but beating Tarver last year was a personal joy, one I look forward to repeating on May 9," said Dawson.

"I've beaten the best in my division. I am the king of the light heavyweights."

Tarver (27-5, 19 KOs), from Tampa, Fla., is one of his era's greatest champions. The only man to hang two losses on the legendary Roy Jones Jr. and the first to ever knock him out, Tarver also boasts victories over world champions Glen Johnson, Montell Griffin and Reggie Johnson. A true renaissance man, Tarver heads up his own promotional company, AT Entertainment, his own charitable foundation, The Antonio Tarver Foundation, a not-for-profit organization established to fund, create and provide opportunities for young people to achieve their dreams, and he co-starred with Sylvester Stallone in the 2006 hit motion picture "Rocky Balboa."

"Dawson's a young lion and he had a high work rate during our first fight," said Tarver. "I missed a few times with my power shot but that's what it is, it's a game of inches. But I always learn from my losses, and as Roy Jones, Glen Johnson, and Eric Harding will tell you, I never lose twice to the same man. Dawson will learn that lesson too on May 9."

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