

ABIPA – ASHEVILLE BUNCOMBE INSTITUTE OF PARITY ACHIEVEMENT

Breast Cancer Awareness

By JéWana Grier-McEachin, Executive Director

Early Detection + Timely Treatment Saves Lives

Breast cancer awareness must extend beyond wearing pink. For African American communities, it is a health-equity issue involving early detection, access to high-quality treatment, family history, genetics, and timely follow-up.

Nationally, Black women develop breast cancer at rates similar to White women, but they are about 40% more likely to die from the disease. Black women are also more likely to be diagnosed with triple-negative breast cancer, an aggressive subtype, and are more often diagnosed beyond stage I.

These differences make screening, rapid follow-up of abnormal results, and access to effective treatment especially important.

North Carolina reflects the same disparity. State data for 2019-2023 shows an age-adjusted breast cancer death rate of 27.1 per 100,000 African American women compared with 18.8 among non-Hispanic White women.

In Buncombe County, 194 women died from breast cancer during 2019-2023. The number of deaths among African American residents was too small for the state to publish a statistically stable race-specific local rate, a reminder that small population counts can hide inequities experienced by individual families.

Men belong in the conversation too. Male breast cancer is uncommon, but research has found a higher incidence among Black men than White men. A lump, nipple discharge, nipple inversion, skin dimpling, swelling, or other unexplained breast or chest change should be evaluated promptly.

The message for our community is clear: know your risk, know what is normal for your body, get recommended screening, and do not delay follow-up. A screening test only saves lives when abnormal findings lead to timely diagnosis and high-quality treatment.



JéWana Grier-McEachin. Photo: Red Angle Photography



Warning Signs for Women and Men

- A new lump or thickening in the breast, chest or underarm
- Change in breast size, shape or appearance
- Skin dimpling, redness, scaling or swelling
- Nipple turning inward, pain or unexpected discharge
- Any persistent change that is new for you

Don't Wait For Your Next Screening

Screening is for people without symptoms. If you notice a new lump, nipple change, discharge, skin change, or other concerning symptom, contact a healthcare provider now rather than waiting for a routine mammogram.

Resources in Asheville & Buncombe County

Buncombe County Breast & Cervical Cancer Control Program

Free breast and cervical screening services, including mammograms, for eligible residents. 40 Coxe Ave., Asheville. Phone (828) 250-6006.

Blue Ridge Health - Arden

Listed by NC DHHS as a Buncombe County BCCCP provider. 303 Airport Rd., Arden. Phone (828) 698-2979.

Mission Breast Center

Mammography and breast imaging, including high-risk services. 534 Biltmore Ave., Suite 210, Asheville. For mammogram scheduling please call (828) 213-9729.

Hope Women's Cancer Center

Breast cancer care and support services. Mission Health reports expanded capacity following 2026 renovations. 100 Ridgefield Ct., Asheville. Phone (828) 670-8403.

The Hope Chest for Women

Local nonprofit resource supporting women affected by breast and gynecologic cancers. 375 Hendersonville Rd., Asheville. Phone (828) 708-3017.



Celebrating 22 Years of Being the Community Health Connection for Asheville and Beyond

Help Us Celebrate Our Birthday by Gifting ABIPA a Donation of \$22

Tax-deductible donations can be made by sending a check to ABIPA, PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802, or donate online at www.abipa.org. Thank you for your support!



JaiEssence McEachin, MPH. Photo: Red Angle Photography

Liver Cancer in the African American Community

by JaiEssence McEachin, MPH

Awareness Can Save Lives

Liver cancer is an important but often overlooked health concern in the African American community. The most common type, hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), frequently develops in people who already have chronic liver disease. Because early liver cancer may cause few or no symptoms, many people are not diagnosed until the disease has progressed and treatment options are more limited.

Racial disparities remain significant. In North Carolina from 2020-2024, non-Hispanic African Americans had an age-adjusted liver cancer death rate of 7.3 per 100,000, compared with 6.6 among non-Hispanic White residents. During that period, 976 African American North Carolinians died from liver cancer.

Risk factors include hepatitis B and C, cirrhosis, heavy alcohol use, tobacco use, diabetes, obesity, and metabolic-associated fatty liver disease. These risks make prevention and early identification of liver disease particularly important.

Disparities in liver cancer are not simply about biology or personal choices. Access to preventive care, hepatitis testing and treatment, health insurance, transportation, specialty care, and timely referrals can influence whether cancer is discovered early and whether patients receive potentially lifesaving treatment. North Carolina's Cancer Plan also identifies later-stage diagnosis and barriers to care as continuing concerns for communities of color.

African American adults can take action by knowing their hepatitis B and C status, limiting alcohol, avoiding tobacco, maintaining a healthy

weight, managing diabetes, and discussing abnormal liver tests with their healthcare provider. People living with cirrhosis or certain chronic hepatitis B infections should ask whether regular liver cancer surveillance is recommended.

Symptoms including unexplained weight loss, abdominal pain or swelling, persistent fatigue, loss of appetite, dark urine, or yellowing of the skin and eyes should not be ignored.

Early detection begins with knowing your risk. Ask your healthcare provider: "How healthy is my liver, and should I be screened or monitored for liver cancer?"

Announcements

ABIPA Can Help You Navigate

Screen • Follow Up • Get Support

Need help understanding resources, preparing questions, or connecting with community support? Reach out to ABIPA and a Community Health Worker. Phone (828) 673-8195.



FREE Sunday Shop

Sunday, October 31

Shop for free supplies from 3-6 p.m. at St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church, 170 Fayetteville Street in Asheville.

ABIPA

PO Box 448, Asheville, NC 28802

Office (828) 673-8195 • Fax (828) 251-8365

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ABIPA promotes economic, social, and healthy parity achievement for African Americans and other underserved populations in Buncombe County through advocacy, education, research, and community partnerships.

