

MS prevalence similar in Black and white people



A new study partially funded by the National MS Society refutes the once-held belief that MS is a disease that primarily affects white people. In the study, researchers from California show that MS is as common in Black people as in white people in Southern California.

The researchers looked at electronic medical records of more than 2.6 million individuals representing a diverse population enrolled in a Kaiser Permanente Southern California health insurance plan. They identified 3,863 people who had MS in 2010 and analyzed their race, ethnicity, age and other characteristics. They found that the prevalence of MS (the number of people living with a diagnosis of MS at a particular point in time, in a particular place) in Black people and white people was similar, and higher than expected.

This and other studies point to the need for additional research, now underway, to better understand the risks of MS in diverse populations so that earlier diagnosis and treatment can reduce the impacts of the disease on quality of life. The U.S. MS Prevalence Workgroup, supported by the Society, is taking a more thorough look at the age, race, ethnicity and gender of people living with MS and estimating their numbers in different parts of the country.