

Lupus Briefing Document
Presented to the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
September 20, 2007

Lupus, or systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), is a chronic inflammatory disease that can target the joints, skin, brain, kidneys, heart, lungs, and blood vessels. Lupus is an autoimmune disease, which means that the immune system attacks its own body's tissues and organs. Lupus is classified as a rheumatic disease, because it affects connective tissues and often manifests with painful joints and arthritis.

CRITERION #1: PREVALENCE / INCIDENCE

- There is a lack of epidemiological information on lupus, and therefore, the exact number of people with lupus is unknown.
- The Lupus Foundation of America estimates that approximately 1.5 million Americans have a form of lupus. The Office of Minority Health at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports a much more conservative estimate of 239,000 people in the U.S. being affected by lupus.

CRITERION #2: SEVERITY

- From 1979 to 1998, the annual number of deaths in the U.S. from lupus increased from 879 to 1,406.
- From 1979 to 1998 the crude death rate from lupus increased from 3.9 to 5.4 deaths per 100,000 U.S. population.
- The average cost to provide medical treatment for a lupus patient is estimated between \$6,000 and \$10,000 per year.
- One out of every three patients with lupus is temporarily disabled by the disease; while one in four is currently receiving disability payments.

CRITERION #3: DISPARITY

- From 1979 to 1998, crude death rates were over three times higher among blacks than among whites in the U.S.
- From 1979 to 1998 the death rate from lupus among black women in the U.S. increased by about 70%.
- According to the National Institutes of Health, one in every 250 black women has lupus.
- Lupus is three times more common in black women than in white women. Lupus is also more common among Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian women.
- From 1979-1998 crude death rates were five times higher among U.S. women than men.
- In 1998, there were 1,214 deaths from lupus among U.S. women and 192 deaths among men.
- The Lupus Foundation of America reports that women comprise 90% of lupus diagnoses.
- According to research from the Lupus in Minorities: Nature Versus Nurture (LUMINA) study, African American and Hispanic lupus patients develop lupus earlier in life and experience more severe disease than white patients.

Sources: (1) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2002. Trends in Deaths from Systemic Lupus Erythematosus – United States, 1979-1998. MMWR 51(17):371-374. (2) National Women's Health Information Center. Lupus – Frequently Asked Questions. Accessed at: <http://www.4women.gov/faq/lupus.htm> on 8/7/07. (3) Lupus Foundation of America. Lupus Statistics. Accessed at: http://www.lupus.org/webmodules/webarticlesnet/templates/new_newsroom.aspx?articleid=247&zoneid=60 on 8/7/2007. (4) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Eliminate Disparities in Lupus: Fact Sheet. Accessed at: <http://www.cdc.gov/omh/AMH/factsheets/lupus.htm> on 8/7/2007. (5) Lupus Research Institute. Who Gets Lupus? Accessed at: http://www.lupusresearchinstitute.org/print.php?id=who_gets_lupus on 8/7/2007.