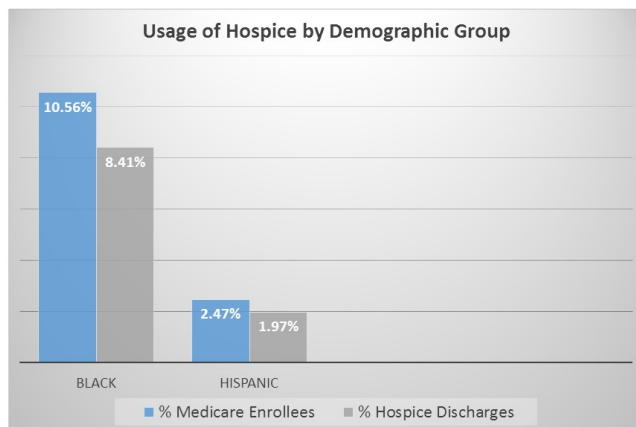


Can the racial divide on hospice usage represent a growth opportunity for your hospice?

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Kaiser Health News recently published [a report](#) stating that only a third of eligible black Medicare beneficiaries enroll in hospice compared to half of white beneficiaries. *And, that racial divide is even more pronounced regarding advance care directives with approximately 40 percent of whites aged 70+ having these plans, compared with only 16 percent of blacks.*

While the report focused on black Americans, HealthMR's preliminary analysis indicates that there is also underutilization of hospice for the Hispanic market. Specifically, our analysis shows that both black and Hispanics underutilize hospice by 20%. Blacks represent nearly 11% of Medicare enrollees, yet their hospice usage is just above 8%. The same is true for Hispanics with almost 2.5% Medicare enrollees and under 2% hospice usage.



Kaiser Health News goes on to state that “black Americans — far more so than whites — choose aggressive life-sustaining interventions, including resuscitation and mechanical ventilation, even when there is little chance of survival. The racial gaps could widen when Medicare is expected to begin paying physicians in January 2016 for end-of-life counseling, and at a time when blacks and other minorities are projected to make up 42 percent of people 65 and over in 2050, up from 20 percent in 2000.”

Recognizing that there are underlying cultural aspects, hospice usage can be increased for these groups, if more people can be made aware of hospice as a viable and valuable option through targeted public relations and marketing efforts. For example, many hospices have found success in promoting hospice utilization through local churches and community nursing programs. Also dual eligible payors who serve a disproportionate number of these population segments will be interested in encouraging hospice utilization. Further, focusing on these underserved groups can be a strategic advantage as more hospitals, ACOs and MCOs look to balance cost of care and quality of care for their post-acute patients.

To determine whether a strategic initiative targeted to this group is worthwhile in your market, simply determine the percentage of blacks and Hispanics in your geographic market and compare that to the percentage of blacks and Hispanics currently utilizing hospice in your market. For example if they are 15% of the population and 5% of the hospice discharges, then there is the opportunity to grow that demographic segment business by 2x-3x.

HealthMR does provide [a Hospice Demographics report](#), which identifies discharged patients by age, race and gender. When compared with census data, the report will help quantify underserved populations in order to assess future hospice growth in your market.

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