Women of color are disproportionally affected by myositis diseases

Myositis is an inflammatory disease of the muscles that can cause severe disability. Symptoms include falling, trouble climbing stairs, difficulty raising arms over the head, and unusual rashes. In adults, certain forms of myositis affect women of color more than Caucasians.

For those with darker skin the rash of dermatomyositis may not be as easy to identify as it is on lighter skin.

African American myositis patients have higher frequencies of certain markers of more severe disease (antisynthetase syndrome and necrotizing myopathy) than European-American myositis patients.

In adults, DM, PM, and NM affect more African Americans than Caucasians.

African Americans with ILD are younger at diagnosis.

Creatine kinase levels (a measure of disease severity) were found to be significantly higher in African Americans compared to Caucasians.

African American myositis patients with a complication called antisynthetase syndrome have more severe lung disease.

DISEASE ABBREVIATIONS & KEY TERMS

DM - dermatomyositis
ILD - interstitial lung disease
JDM - juvenile dermatomyositis
NM - necrotizing myopathy
PM - polymyositis

Nonwhite women are twice as likely to die than others with myositis, and they are four times more likely to die than white men with the disease.
Nonwhite women with multiple chronic conditions have the highest rates of hospitalization for dermatomyositis. 8

Mortality rates from DM and PM are highest among women of color. 7

In the childbearing years (ages 15-34), mortality in nonwhite women with myositis is 3.5 times greater than in Caucasian women with the disease. 7

African American children with JDM have an increased risk of developing calcinosis, a painful accumulation of calcium under the skin. 9

Nonwhite women die at a younger age than others with DM and PM. 7

While these statistics show the disproportionate burden of myositis on women of color, you are not alone! TMA is here for you with support and resources.

Sources