This month, the "Take Charge of Your Health" page focuses on disparities in breast cancer outcomes. By Schindler, community engagement director of the Urban League of Pittsburgh’s Criminal and Transitional Service Organization. By Buchbinder and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh, spoke about this topic.

**BS: Good morning, Ms. Bush. I thank you for the chance to talk with you today about breast cancer outcomes, a topic that is relevant to so many of us—especially as breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis among African American women.**

**EB: Yes, Ms. Bush. This is a topic that most people can relate to, especially if they're in the African American community where Black women make up nearly 29 percent of the population. Research shows that the rate for white women dying from breast cancer is 22 percent, while that rate nearly doubles for Black women. We have to pay attention to this.**

**BS: Absolutely. In addition to the thinking about social determinants of health—in which conditions folks live, learn, work and play affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes—researchers note that African American women who present with breast cancer are more likely to be diagnosed with aggressive types of cancer that are harder to treat. A big part of the issue is that not enough Black women have been included in research, which limits how well the disease is understood, proven, detected, diagnosed and treated.**

**EB: That’s important to mention because African Americans are on their own in advocating for their health. Taking charge of one’s health will lead to better health outcomes.**

**BS: I second getting more African American women involved in breast cancer research. Also, despite the disparities, survival rates are better when people see something, feel something and advocate for themselves, something we need to think about in this conversation.**

**EB: Thank you so much for having this conversation with me. Ms. Bliss. I hope our readers take away from our conversation that it’s important to advocate for their selves when their health is concerned—to do so in the way that makes the most sense for themselves. I look forward to next month as we discuss men’s health!**

### Black Women and Breast Cancer Research

**by Margaret Rosenweig, PhD**

As a cancer nurse, I focus on ensuring all women with breast cancer I work with receive the most current, best-quality care and support. As a researcher, I focus on better understanding why racial disparities in breast cancer outcomes exist and how we can reduce them. I believe that research and outreach initiatives have been critical in addressing racial and economic disparities in breast cancer survival. In 2011, my team launched the Attitude, Communication, Treatment, Support (ACTS) Intervention. This intervention, funded through the American Cancer Society, targeted traditionally underserved Black women with breast cancer, who, when recommended to begin chemotherapy, had little initiation. Yet, half of the women who were about to begin treatment were delayed or dropped out of treatment. Today, I am excited to share the results of a recent study led by the Symptom Experience, Management and Outcomes (SEMOARS) study, funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The SEMOARS study found that Black and White women undergoing chemotherapy treatment and described the treatment in terms of their existing patient’s ability to receive full chemotherapy treatment.

### ADAPTING TREATMENT

Researchers think some African American women may receive less aggressive forms of surgery or other treatment compared to White women. Our study showed that women who perceived their health care providers as more...