



COVID-19 Vaccines and MS Video Series

The Detrimental Impact of COVID-19 on the African American MS Community

Featuring:

Mitzi Joi Williams, MD, FAAN

Mitzi Joi Williams:

Hi, my name is Dr. Mitzi Joi Williams. I'm a board-certified neurologist and fellowship-trained MS specialist. I'm also the medical director and founder of the Joi Life Wellness MS Center in Atlanta, Georgia. I am also pleased to be the co-chair of the African American Advisory Board for the MS Association of America.

The current research regarding the impact of COVID on different ethnic populations really hasn't changed over time. What we saw in the beginning and during the height of the pandemic is that certain populations, primarily minority populations, African Americans, Hispanic Latino Americans, and Native Americans had higher morbidity as well as higher mortality or death rates related to COVID-19.

Comorbidities, diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular disease tend to be more common in certain populations, so we do see differences in seriousness, but we can't say that that's related solely to ethnicity. It may be related to larger societal issues such as health disparities, as well as the health condition of people in certain population groups.

The best practices in minimizing those risk factors are certainly getting vaccinated. We know that that decreases the risk of severity of infection. Also focusing on overall health and wellness is extremely important. Making sure that people have access to primary care physicians, access to treatment for those comorbid conditions, can help decrease the seriousness of outcomes if people have those issues under control, and also if they have access to care.