Press Release
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Every Heart Counts: New Survey Reveals Hidden Heart Health Crisis in U.S. Cardiology Deserts

The Association of Black Cardiologists' new initiative addresses the needs of rural and urban communities with customized outreach, partnerships, and trusted voices to improve awareness of critical heart health screenings and risk factors.

Washington, DC (November 12, 2025) – The Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) released new findings from a national survey exposing a widespread gap in awareness regarding cholesterol and cardiovascular health. These insights reinforce the urgency of the organization's *"Every Heart Counts: ABC Cardiology Deserts Campaign"* – a nationwide initiative addressing persistent disparities in access to heart health education and care in under-resourced regions across the country.

Among the most concerning insights, 40% of Americans surveyed indicated no prior knowledge that there are two major types of cholesterol, one considered "good" (HDL-C) and the other "bad" (LDL-C). This lack of awareness is even more pronounced among Black (54%) and Hispanic (49%) respondents.

"When communities lack the tools to understand their heart health, it's not just a missed opportunity – it's a public health crisis," said Anthony Fletcher, MD, President of the Association of Black Cardiologists. "Through this campaign, we're building sustainable pathways to care so that every person – regardless of race, income, or ZIP code – has access to the knowledge and support to protect their heart, because every heart counts."

This campaign comes at a critical time when heart disease remains one of the top causes of death, claiming more lives each year than all forms of cancer combined[i]. Despite advances in treatment and prevention, the burden of heart disease continues to disproportionately weigh on vulnerable populations. Communities of color, particularly Black and Hispanic Americans, experience significantly higher rates of hypertension, diabetes, and other cardiovascular risk factors, often compounded by systemic barriers to care, socioeconomic issues, and limited availability of preventive resources. Rural populations, older adults, and those with lower incomes are also at elevated risk of premature death due to heart disease and stroke. By

launching this program, ABC will not only raise awareness but also promote activation toward evidence-based preventive care while driving pathways to essential care for those who need it the most.

In addition to a gap in general awareness, the survey uncovered disparities in cardiovascular knowledge and care which continue to deepen along racial, regional, and socioeconomic lines:

- Knowledge Gaps:
    - Nearly half (45%) of adults in the Southern United States remain unaware of the difference between "good" and "bad" cholesterol, and one in five Southerners who have heard of both types still can't correctly distinguish between them.
    - Sadly, only 36% of all respondents know their own cholesterol levels, with that number dropping to 30% among Hispanic respondents and 29% among Black respondents.
- Access Barriers:
    - One in four adults travels 10-20 miles to see a heart specialist, with higher rates in Louisiana, Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi.
    - 22% of respondents tried but could not secure a cardiology appointment.
- Screening Shortfalls:
    - 15% of all respondents, and nearly one in five Black and Hispanic adults, report never having received a cardiovascular screening.
- Perception Gap:
    - One in five adults believes they don't need heart care, even among higher-risk groups like adults older than 65, rural residents, and women.

"This initiative represents our commitment to transforming data into better outcomes," said Dr. Fletcher. "We are working hand in hand with primary care providers and local organizations to bring life-saving heart care closer to the people who need it most."

The *"Every Heart Counts: ABC Cardiology Deserts Campaign,"* with seed sponsorship support from Amgen, confronts structural barriers that prevent millions of Americans from receiving timely, quality cardiovascular care. The campaign enhances primary provider capabilities, broadens the reach of LDL-C screening, and engages communities to actively pursue healthier outcomes. As part of this work, ABC has already launched the community activation and provider education campaign in Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, states that could benefit most from a paradigm shift from treating disease to prevention.

"ABC is uniquely qualified to address the specific needs of communities and support on-the-ground efforts to improve heart health outcomes in high-risk communities with screening and education," said Paul Burton, MD, PhD, senior vice president and chief medical officer at Amgen. "At Amgen, we believe in the power of collaboration to drive meaningful change, and this initiative reflects our dedication to making a difference in the communities we serve."

ABC encourages individuals, clinicians, and community leaders to join the movement to close the heart health gap. Learn more about the *"Every Heart Counts: ABC Cardiology Deserts Campaign"* and access free screening resources at www.abcardio.org.

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About the Association of Black Cardiologists
Founded in 1974, the Association of Black Cardiologists (ABC) is a nonprofit organization comprised of cardiologists, healthcare professionals, and community advocates committed to eliminating the disparities that lead to poor cardiovascular outcomes in underserved communities. Membership is open to all, regardless of race, ethnicity, or vocation, ABC promotes health equity through a combination of professional education, patient and community outreach, grassroots advocacy, and science. Learn more at www.abcardio.org.

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[i] Martin, S. S., Aday, A. W., Allen, N. B., et al. (2025). 2025 Heart Disease and Stroke Statistics: A Report of US and Global Data From the American Heart Association. *Circulation*, *151*(8), e41–e660. https://doi.org/10.1161/cir.0000000000001303.