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From noticing symptoms to a breast cancer diagnosis: Black women's experiences in the UK

Submission date
01/10/2026

Recruitment status
Recruiting

Registration date
16/11/2026

Overall study status
Ongoing

Last Edited
16/11/2026

Condition category
Cancer

[ ] Prospectively registered
[ ] Protocol
[ ] Statistical analysis plan
[ ] Results
[ ] Individual participant data
[X] Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
This study aims to understand the experiences of Black women diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK after noticing symptoms. Research shows that Black women are more likely to be diagnosed at a later stage and may experience delays in receiving a diagnosis and starting treatment.

This research wants to learn about women's journeys from first noticing a symptom to receiving a diagnosis and starting treatment. Towards the end of the study, a stakeholder workshop will be held to discuss the findings and identify priorities for further research. Listening to women's experiences will help to better understand the factors that affect these journeys and identify ways to improve care and support earlier diagnosis for Black women in the future.

Who can participate?
Women of Black African or Black Caribbean heritage who have recently received a first diagnosis of breast cancer in one of the hospitals supporting the study.

What does the study involve?
Participation involves taking part in one confidential interview with a member of the research team.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
There is no direct benefit from taking part; however, participants may value sharing their experiences and contributing to research that could improve care for Black women with breast cancer.

Talking about their experiences may be upsetting or emotional. Participants can choose not to answer any question and pause or stop the interview at any time. If needed, the researcher can provide information about support services or suggest that they contact their GP.

Where is the study run from?
The study is run from the Department of Applied Health Sciences at the University of Birmingham, UK.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
November 2026 to April 2028.

Who is funding the study?
The Wellcome Trust, UK.

Who is the main contact?
Dr Patricia Apenteng, p.n.k.apenteng@bham.ac.uk

Contact information

Type(s)
Principal investigator, Scientific, Public

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Additional identifiers

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
358475

Central Portfolio Management System (CPMS)
68385

Wellcome Trust Grant Code
333493/Z/25/Z

Study information

Scientific Title
Pathways to the diagnosis of symptomatic breast cancer among Black women in the UK: a qualitative interview study

Acronym

PATH-B

Study objectives
Aim: To understand the pathways to the diagnosis of symptomatic breast cancer among Black women in the UK and set priorities for further research.

Objectives
1. To explore Black women's experiences from first noticing breast symptoms through to diagnosis and initiation of treatment.
2. To identify factors that facilitate or hinder timely progression through these stages.
3. To work with stakeholders in a workshop to interpret the findings and agree priorities for further research

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 28/09/2026, Wales Research Ethics Committee 4 (Health and Care Research Wales, Floor 4, Crown Building, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ, United Kingdom; -; Wales.REC4@wales.nhs.uk), ref: 26/WA/0248

Primary study design
Observational

Study design
Qualitative study using semi-structured interviews of women of black African and Black Caribbean descent diagnosed with symptomatic breast cancer

Study type(s)
Treatment

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Malignant neoplasm of breast in women of black African and Black Caribbean descent

Interventions
This study is a qualitative interview study exploring Black women's experiences of the pathway to diagnosis of symptomatic breast cancer in the UK. 40 Black women (aged 18 years and over) who have recently been diagnosed with symptomatic breast cancer will be recruited through NHS breast clinics across four NHS Trusts in Birmingham and London.
Potential participants will first be identified by trained NHS research nurses (who are considered part of a patient's clinical care team) or clinical staff from clinic lists. Eligible women will be given a participant information sheet and invited to express interest in taking part either by completing a paper or online expression of interest form. Women who express interest will then be contacted by a member of the research team to discuss the study, answer any questions, and arrange an interview if they wish to participate.

Participants will take part in one face-to-face semi-structured interview lasting 60-90 minutes. Interviews will take place either in the participant's home or in a private room at the hospital, depending on the participant's preference. Before the interview begins, informed consent will be obtained. With permission, interviews will be audio-recorded using an encrypted digital recorder. If a participant does not wish to be recorded, written notes will be taken instead.

During the interview, participants will be asked about their experiences from first noticing breast symptoms through to seeking help, receiving a diagnosis of breast cancer and starting treatment. The interview will also explore factors that may have helped or delayed diagnosis and /or treatment. Participants may stop the interview, skip questions, or withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Interviews will be transcribed, anonymised, and analysed using thematic analysis to identify common experiences and factors influencing diagnostic pathways. Towards the end of the study, a stakeholder workshop involving patients, public contributors, healthcare professionals, charity representatives, and researchers will be held to discuss and interpret the findings and help identify priorities for improving care and future research.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. Pathways to the diagnosis of symptomatic breast cancer among Black women in the UK measured using data collected during face-to-face semi-structured interviews at one 60-90 minute interview

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date
30/04/2028

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
The inclusion criteria for the patient interviews are:
1. Women of Black African or Black Caribbean ethnicity with a first histologically confirmed diagnosis of symptomatic breast cancer within 6 months from search date
2. Aged > = 18 years
3. Diagnosed with breast cancer at a participating NHS site
4. Ability to provide informed consent

The inclusion criteria for the stakeholder workshop are:
1. a Black woman with lived experience of breast cancer
2. a representative of a cancer charity or Black community organisation
3. a healthcare professional
4. an academic or researcher with expertise relevant to breast cancer diagnosis or health inequalities
5. Able to speak English

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
120 Years

Sex
Female

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
The exclusion criteria for the patient interviews are:
1. Women who do not identify as being of either Black African or Black Caribbean ethnicity (including mixed ethnicity)
2. Black women diagnosed with breast cancer secondary to a primary cancer
3. Black women diagnosed with recurrent breast cancer
4. Black women who are acutely ill or receiving end-of-life care
5. Black women with breast cancer detected via a screening programme
6. Black women diagnosed with breast cancer at a non-participating NHS site
7. Black women unable to provide informed consent
8. Black women under 18 years of age

The exclusion criteria for the stakeholder workshop are:
1. Those who do not meet one of the inclusion criteria (i.e., are not a Black woman with lived experience of breast cancer, a representative of a cancer charity or Black community organisation, a healthcare professional, or an academic/researcher with relevant expertise in breast cancer diagnosis or health inequalities)
2. Those unable to provide informed consent
3. Those under 18 years of age

Date of first enrolment
02/11/2026

Date of final enrolment
28/04/2028

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
Queen Elizabeth Hospital
Mindelsohn Way
Edgbaston

Birmingham
England
B15 2GW

Study participating centre
Midland Metropolitan University Hospital
Grove Lane
Smethwick
England
B66 2QT

Study participating centre
St Thomas' Hospital
Westminster Bridge Road
London
England
SE1 7EH

Study participating centre
University Hospital Lewisham
Lewisham High Street
London
England
SE13 6LH

Sponsor information

Organisation
University of Birmingham

ROR
https://ror.org/03angcq70

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Wellcome Trust

Alternative Name(s)
Wellcome, WT

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date