

## **Cancer in Puerto Rican Women: Key Points**

### **Vital Statistics and Social Indicators**

- The Puerto Rican population totals about 6 million, with 60 percent living in Puerto Rico and the remaining 40 percent living in the continental United States.
- There are about 2 million Puerto Rican adult women.
- Puerto Rican women as a whole have higher rates of poverty and are less educated than U.S. Whites.
- Puerto Rican women living on the island tend to be older, are more likely to be unemployed, and are poorer in terms of absolute income than their mainland counterparts.
- Among Hispanics (Cuban, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican men and women), Puerto Rican women are the most likely to have health insurance (more than 80 percent).

### **Cancer Rates, Mortality, and Risk Factors**

- The most common cancers among Puerto Rican women from 1992 to 1998 were cancers of the breast and lung and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Overall, cancer rates for Puerto Rican women in the continental United States are similar to those for women in Puerto Rico, although incidence varies significantly between these subgroups for some sites.
- Recent data suggest that rates of mammography have increased since the 1980s among Puerto Rican women—just under half of Puerto Rican women report having had a mammogram within 3 years—but Hispanic women in general are substantially less likely than their non-Hispanic counterparts to have had a recent Pap test.
- In Puerto Rico, targeted efforts appear to have contributed to a reduction in late-stage cervical cancer diagnosis and in cervical cancer mortality.
- Puerto Rican women on the mainland smoke more than most Hispanics and other ethnic groups, but studies suggest that women in Puerto Rico smoke less than on the mainland.

### **Data Limitations and Future Directions**

- There is no single source of reliable data on cancer rates, mortality, and survival for Puerto Rican women in the mainland United States.
- Puerto Rican women appear to have more favorable cancer mortality profiles than White groups; however, the data's limitations may skew this picture.
- A need exists to track and better understand the cancer risks and experience of Puerto Rican women over time, in various locations, and across generations.