Today’s piece was prepared by Van Chau, MD, based on a San Francisco Chronicle story [Babies’ race affects quality of care in California neonatal intensive care, study says](http://www.sfgate.com/business/article/Babies-race-affects-quality-of-care-in-12001309.php#photo-13986325)

This article notes “Asian American and white infants received the highest overall quality of care” in NICUs across California as published by a study out of the journal Pediatrics titled [*Ethnic/Racial Disparity in NICU Quality of Care Delivery*](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2017/08/24/peds.2017-0918). While the article comments on how differences are not always well defined, it emphasizes the role race plays on neonatal outcomes.

The article appears misleading. First, it is difficult to measure quality of care, defined in this study using an unvalidated instrument. Second, most of the racial differences demonstrated in the study are not statistically significant. In fact, only 4 of 9 of the measures between African American and white infants are statistically different and of those, 3 favor African Americans. Finally, the study did not adjust for confounders, the most glaring of which are income, education, access to prenatal care, and geography, which may play bigger roles in the disadvantages minorities face in the healthcare system than race itself. [A study in Pediatrics](http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/07/11/peds.2015-2388) reports that demographic variables fully mediate differences in intent and duration of breastfeeding in African American and white mothers.

While this SF Chronicle article adequately summarizes this important NICU study, it can be harmful in that it sensationalizes differences in care delivery by race/ethnicity. This type of media coverage can reinforce mistrust among African American and Hispanic populations who may already not have favorable perspectives of our current healthcare system and lead to avoidance in seeking care and ultimately worse health outcomes.

**RESOURCES ON CULTURAL SUPPORTS:**

[Cultural resources for healthcare access](https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Resources.html#section4_textarea18_heading) *Available via the UW Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics website*

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!