Cancer is the second leading cause of death among American Indian/Alaska Natives (AI/AN). AI/AN experience consistently higher incidence rates of neoplastic malignancies, including squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck (SCCHN). This study aims to identify potential barriers to care that result in the discrepancy in overall survival between AI/AN and White patients with SCCHN.

**METHODS**

We identified all incident cases of cancer (ICD-O-3 codes) among AI/AN and White patients from 1995-2010 using the SEER database. Baseline characteristics were analyzed for age, sex, stage, and type of treatment. The hazard ratios (HR) of overall survival were adjusted for age, sex, stage, and type of treatment.

**RESULTS**

**Cancer Site**

- **Oropharynx**
  - AI/AN: 1,006 (25)
  - White: 7 (23)
  - P value: 1.4

- **Hypopharynx/Larynx**
  - AI/AN: 62 (48)
  - White: 13,952 (60)
  - P value: 1.4

**Characteristics**

- AI/AN N (%)
  - Local: 0.9
  - Regional: 0.17
  - Distant: 0.27*

- White N (%)
  - Local: 1.6
  - Regional: 0.8
  - Distant: 0.2

**Survival**

- For cancer of the oropharynx, AI/AN were less likely than whites to receive surgery for cancer of the oral cavity (78% vs. 85%, p=0.02, Table 2).

**DISCUSSION**

Significant disparities in survival exist among AI/AN patients with head and neck cancer. These disparities are variably related to stage at presentation and differential treatment patterns. Future research is needed to understand how to implement programs to reduce these differences in care and outcomes.