CancerLinQ Data Reveals Black and Hispanic Patients With Cancer Face Greater Risk of COVID-19 Infection

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**ASCO Perspective**

“Patients with cancer should not have to make the decision between receiving cancer treatment and avoiding the risk of contracting COVID-19. Health care providers should be aware of this increased risk in Black and Hispanic patients with cancer so that steps can be taken to mitigate the risk of infection,” said Sonali M. Smith, MD, ASCO Expert.

>This summary includes updated data not in the abstract.

**ALEXANDRIA, Va.–**Black and Hispanic patients with cancer were more likely to be infected with COVID-19 than white patients, based on the findings of a study of more than 477,000 patients with cancer. The study will be presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology’s (ASCO) upcoming Quality Care Symposium, taking place virtually October 9–10, 2020.

**Study at a Glance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>The increased risk of developing COVID-19 in minority patients with cancer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>477,613 patients with cancer in the CancerLinQ database</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Black and Hispanic patients with cancer had significantly higher risk of developing COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance</td>
<td>Highlights the importance of mitigating the risk of infection in high-risk populations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Findings**

Using data from ASCO’s CancerLinQ Discovery® database, researchers found that Black patients with cancer were almost two times more likely (relative risk 1.69) and Hispanic patients were more than five times more likely (relative risk 5.25) to test positive for COVID-19 compared with white patients. The CancerLinQ® database, developed by ASCO, contains longitudinal electronic health record data from oncology practices throughout the United States. The database currently contains data for nearly 2 million patients with cancer.

“Patients with cancer are, unfortunately, faced with balancing cancer treatments with the risk of developing COVID-19,” said Robert S. Miller MD, FACP, FASCO, medical director for CancerLinQ. “This research, while preliminary, will hopefully help patients and providers understand who’s most at risk for COVID-19 and plan cancer treatment accordingly.”

Additionally, patients with hematologic cancers were 1.36 times more likely to be diagnosed with COVID-19 compared to patients with solid tumors.

**About the Study**

The authors examined the records of 477,613 patients with cancer from the beginning of January to the end of August 2020. Patients with cancer and COVID-19 were identified in 23 of the 29 CancerLinQ practices reporting SARS-Cov2 test results (the virus that causes COVID-19) during the study period.
The Black patients in the study group were approximately two times more likely to have COVID-19 as compared with white patients, and Hispanic patients were more than five times more likely to have the disease. The elevated risk among patients with hematologic cancers is noteworthy, as these individuals often have compromised immune systems and are already susceptible to many other types of infection.

“It's important to emphasize how critically important it is to gather data specifically about patients with cancer during this pandemic,” Miller said. “We have to better understand the risks to different populations to identify mitigation strategies. CancerLinQ surveillance is one of the ways that we can gain more information about patients with cancer during the pandemic.”

CancerLinQ® is a real-world oncology data platform developed by ASCO that collects and aggregates longitudinal electronic health record (EHR) data from oncology practices throughout the United States. The goal is to rapidly improve patient care and accelerate discovery by securely compiling, harmonizing, analyzing, and de-identifying vast amounts of information on patient characteristics (e.g., molecular profiles, comorbidities), treatments, and long-term side effects. By using data from nearly two million patients in near real time, CancerLinQ can identify trends and associations between myriad variables, thereby enabling physicians to generate new hypotheses and apply those conclusions to improve care in real-world settings.

**Next Steps**

The authors plan to continue analyzing data as this patient population grows. They hope to examine whether other risk factors, such as stage at diagnosis, presence of certain malignancies, and certain types of cancer treatment—may also increase a patient's risk for COVID-19. In addition, they plan to look for more specific risk factors for death related to COVID-19 in patients with cancer.

**Funding**
No external funding was received.

View the abstract.

For your readers:

- COVID-19 Resources for People With Cancer
- Health Disparities and Cancer
- The Impact of COVID-19 on Black and Hispanic People with Cancer: Research from the 2020 Quality Care Symposium

View the disclosures for the 2020 ASCO Quality Care Symposium News Planning Team:

Disclosures for the study authors can be found in the abstract.

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About ASCO:
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