

Coronavirus May Keep Nearly 1 in 5 Cancer Patients from Clinical Trials

A significant portion of cancer patients may be less likely to enroll in a clinical trial due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic

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A significant portion of cancer patients may be less likely to enroll in a clinical trial due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. According to an article published this week in JAMA Oncology, nearly 1 in 5 cancer patients surveyed said the pandemic would make them less likely to enroll in a trial. The top reason given for not enrolling is fear of COVID-19 exposure.

“While most patients would still be willing to take part in a clinical trial during the pandemic, the fear of COVID-19 exposure that would come with participating in a clinical trial is poised to cause many otherwise interested patients from enrolling. This means that trials that already struggled to find enough patients are likely to see reduced enrollment as long as the pandemic continues,” said Mark Fleury, co-author of the article and policy principle for emerging issues at the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). “The barriers patients already faced pre pandemic made it challenging to take part in clinical trials. Now with the addition of COVID-19, it is even harder and we’re likely to see long-term impacts on the pace of research.”

The finding was based on a survey ACS CAN conducted of cancer patients and survivors between late May and mid-June. Later [surveys](#) showed COVID anxiety remains high among patients and fear of contracting the virus were cited—along with facility closures—as one of the main reasons patients delayed cancer care. Cancer patients are among those most at risk for severe effects of the coronavirus.

“The pandemic caused many institutions to stop enrolling new patients on clinical trials, and the assumption was that once facilities reopened, they could get enrollment back to normal. What we’ve found is that so long as the pandemic is still underway, fewer patients are going to volunteer for clinical trials,” said Fleury. “The solution is that we need to get the pandemic under control or find innovative ways like telemedicine visits so that patients can take part in clinical trials without feeling exposed to additional COVID-19 risks.”

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