Cancer Incidence, Death Rates in 2040 Will Differ From Current Numbers

In the United States, the most common malignancies are expected to be breast cancer, melanoma, lung cancer and colorectal cancer.

May 11, 2021 By Sukanya Charuchandra

Researchers estimate that the cancer incidence and death rates in 2040 will greatly differ from today's numbers, according to a report in JAMA Network Open. In 2040, researchers expect there to be increases in the incidence of melanoma and more deaths from pancreatic cancer and liver cancer but drops in pancreatic cancer incidence and breast cancer deaths.

In 2020, there were 1.8 million new cancer diagnoses and more than 600,000 cancer-related deaths across the United States. Lola Rahib, PhD, of Cancer Commons in California, and colleagues set out to assess the expected cancer prevalence and related deaths by the year 2040. The team used current incidence and death rates as well as projections for 2040.

The researchers used data from the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Program and supplemented it with census information from 2010 and projections for the period between 2016 and 2040. SEER includes data from population-based cancer registries that cover some 35% of the U.S. population.

The team took into account incidence and death rates for the most common cancer types in the United States. They calculated average annual percent changes for the 10 most common cancers and the 10 most common causes of cancer-related death in men and women.

Based on their findings, the researchers predicted that breast cancer (364,000 cases), melanoma (219,000 cases), lung cancer (208,000 cases) and colorectal cancer (147,000 cases) will be the most common cancer types in 2040. Prostate cancer is expected to fall to the 14th most common cancer, with 66,000 cases.

With respect to deaths from cancer, the most common cause will continue to be lung cancer (63,000 deaths), followed by pancreatic cancer (46,000 deaths), cancers affecting the liver and intrahepatic bile duct (41,000 deaths), colorectal cancer (34,000 deaths) and breast cancer (30,000 deaths).

When looking specifically at adults between ages 20 and 49, the four most common cancer types

in 2040 will be breast, colorectal, thyroid and kidney cancer. In this group, the most common cancer-related causes of death will be colorectal, breast, lung and brain or other central nervous system cancers.

“The estimated absolute number of cancer diagnoses and deaths will be important to inform the need for professionals trained to recognize and care for individuals with the disease, the burden on insurance companies and government programs, and the allocation of research funding to support future prevention and treatments,” the study authors wrote.

Click here to read the study in JAMA Network Open.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/cancer-incidence-death-rates-2040-will-differ-current-numbers