Drugs for Hypertension Linked to Lower Colorectal Cancer Mortality

Good adherence to these medications further improved survival outcomes.

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Usage of drugs to treat hypertension (high blood pressure) was associated with better survival among people with colorectal cancer, according to study results published in Cancer Medicine.

Colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer diagnosis in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society, 104,270 new cases of colon cancer and 45,230 new cases of rectal cancer will be diagnosed in 2021, and an estimated 52,980 people will die of colorectal cancer.

Drugs that lower blood pressure, known as antihypertensives, may disrupt the formation of blood vessels in tumors (angiogenesis). Such medicines have been linked to improved survival for some cancers. While high blood pressure is often seen among people with colorectal cancer, the impact of antihypertensive drugs on clinical outcomes is not well studied.

Rajesh Balkrishnan, PhD, of the University of Virginia School of Medicine, and colleagues conducted a retrospective study of individuals in the Surveillance, Epidemiology and End-Results (SEER) Medicare database. The analysis involved 13,982 participants at least 65 years old who were diagnosed with colorectal cancer between January 2007 and December. Of these, 8,025 were prescribed beta blockers; 6,927 used thiazide diuretics; 5,803 used angiotensin-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors; 1,171 used angiotensin II receptor blockers; and 2,553 did not use antihypertensives.

The researchers found that using a blood pressure-reducing drug was linked to lower mortality from cancer. What's more, those who regularly used these medications had a reduced risk for cancer-related death.

"Cost-effective solutions to prolong cancer survivorship in older patients may lie in commonly used medications," Balkrishnan said in a press release. "However, we need further confirmation of these findings through clinical trials."

Click here to read the study in Cancer Medicine.

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