New Study Shows Adolescent and Young Adult Cancer Survivors Face Increased Cancer Incidence and Mortality Risk

Thirty-five years post-cancer diagnosis, one in seven survivors developed new cancer and one in 16 survivors died from new cancer.

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New findings led by researchers at the American Cancer Society (ACS) show that five-year survivors of adolescent and young adult (AYA) cancer in the United States have a higher risk of developing and nearly double the risk of dying from a new primary cancer as the general population. The study was published today in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI).

“The risk of subsequent primary cancer among cancer survivors has been extensively studied among childhood cancer survivors, but relatively less is known about AYA cancer survivors,” said Dr. Hyuna Sung, principal scientist, cancer surveillance research at the American Cancer Society and lead author of the study. “These results strongly stress the need to expand research on and strengthen efforts for surveillance of subsequent cancers among childhood and AYA cancer survivors, as well as develop age-specific, exposure-based and risk-stratified prevention strategies in this growing population of survivors.”

In this study, researchers sought to provide a comprehensive profile of the risk of developing and dying from subsequent cancers among survivors of 29 AYA cancers diagnosed during ages 15-39. The analysis included more than 170,000 individuals in 9 Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results registries who survived five years since their initial cancer diagnosis from 1975 to 2013 in the U.S. Thirty-five years post-cancer diagnosis, one in seven survivors developed new cancer and one in 16 survivors died from new cancer. The risk among survivors overall compared with the general population was 25% higher for cancer incidence and 84% higher for cancer death. The types of subsequent primary cancer and the magnitude of the risk varied substantially by the first cancer type. However, female breast, lung and colorectal cancers were the most common, constituting 36% of all subsequent cancers and 39% of all subsequent cancer deaths. Lung cancer alone represented 11% of all subsequent cancers and 24% of all deaths from subsequent cancers.

“These findings underscore the critical role of providing high-quality post-treatment survivorship

care to reduce the risk of subsequent cancers," Sung said. "Given the younger age at diagnosis, there often should be more opportunities for prevention and early detection of subsequent cancers in this survivor group. However, preventing and managing such risk requires knowledge of its impact and optimal risk-based screening in place. Access to easily understood information and tailored resources based on survivors' history of cancer are needed to support survivors to navigate survivorship care and maximize wellness as they age."

Dr. Ahmedin Jemal is senior author of the study. Other ACS authors include: Rebecca Siegel, Dr. Noorie Hyun, Kimberly Miller, and Dr. Robin Yabroff.

Resources from the American Cancer Society about AYA cancer survivorship can be found here.

Study can be found here.

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