

People With Advanced Cancer Are More Likely to Use Palliative Care if Close to Home

Cancer patients in rural areas, socioeconomically deprived areas and the South had less access to palliative care physicians.

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A new study from researchers at the [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS) found that adults in the United States with stage IV cancer living in nonmetropolitan, socioeconomically deprived areas, the southern U.S., or being treated at community facilities had lower accessibility to palliative care physicians than their counterparts in other areas. Patients who had higher geographic accessibility to palliative care providers were more likely to receive the care in both metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. These findings [were] presented at the annual [American Society of Clinical Oncology \(ASCO\) Quality Care Symposium](#) in Boston, October 27–28, 2023.

In the study, researchers, led by [Qinjin Fan](#), senior scientist, health services research at the American Cancer Society, used data from the National Cancer Database to find records of more than 333,000 adults newly diagnosed with stage IV cancer in 2018 and 2019 in the contiguous U.S. These records were combined with data on the locations of Medicare physicians who specialize in hospice and palliative care to determine accessibility. Researchers then looked at data showing whether palliative treatments were received.

Researchers suggest that the overall low receipt of this recommended care may potentially reflect inadequate access to palliative care providers nationwide. They emphasized that these findings support the need for strategies to increase the number of palliative care physicians, especially in rural and socioeconomically deprived areas, to enhance the accessibility of guideline-recommended palliative care.

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