

Cancer survivors battle with the blues

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Depressed cancer survivors are twice as likely to die prematurely than those who do not suffer from depression, irrespective of the cancer site. That's according to a new study, by Floortje Mols and colleagues, from Tilburg University in The Netherlands. Their work is published online in Springer's *Journal of Cancer Survivorship*.

The prevalence of cancer is rising, as are the number of individuals who are cured of their cancer or are living with it as a chronic disease. This is partly due to the aging of the population and more effective treatments. As a result, many of these survivors face continuing problems due to cancer and its treatment, including a high prevalence of depression.

Mols and team examined whether depressive symptoms observed between one and ten years after [cancer diagnosis](#) were linked to an increased risk of premature death two to three years later. Their work focused on survivors of endometrial cancer, colorectal cancer, lymphoma or [multiple myeloma](#), where little work looking at this potential link has been done to date.

They analyzed data collected from several large population-based surveys in 2008 and 2009. A total of 3,080 cancer survivors completed questionnaires to identify [symptoms of depression](#).

The authors found that depressive symptoms increased the risk of death: clinically high levels of depressive symptoms were more common in those who died than in those who survived. Overall, after controlling for treatment, type of cancer, co-morbidity, and metastasis, one-to-ten-year

[cancer survivors](#) with depression were twice as likely to have died early.

The researchers conclude: "Paying attention to the recognition and treatment of depressive symptoms in this patient group is key. The next step is to investigate the possible mechanisms that might explain the association between depressive symptoms and death from cancer. We also need to better understand whether treatments for depressive symptoms in cancer patients have life-prolonging effects."

More information: Mols, F. et al. (2013), Depressive symptoms are a risk factor for all-cause mortality: results from a prospective population-based study among 3,080 cancer survivors from the PROFILES registry, *Journal of Cancer Survivorship*. [DOI 10.1007/s11764-013-0286-6](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11764-013-0286-6)

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