

Cancer risk for aging Baby Boomers

December 2 2013

As 10,000 baby boomers reach 65 each day, the incidence of cancer is increasing, estimated to increase by 67% between 2010 and 2030, bringing attention to the nation's response to cancer care. Cancer is diagnosed at a higher rate, accounts for more survivors, and results in more deaths than in younger patients.

"The increase in the number of [older adults](#), the association of [cancer](#) with aging, the workforce shortage, and the financial stressors across the health care system and family networks all contribute to a crisis in cancer care that is most pronounced in the older population," wrote three members of the Institute of Medication Committee on Improving the Quality of Cancer Care: Addressing the Challenges of an Aging Population in an editorial published In *JAMA*, *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

"Often caregiving falls to a family member who is also aging," noted Mary D. Naylor, PhD, FAAN, RN, the Marian S. Ware Professor in Gerontology and the Director of the NewCourtland Center for Transitions and Health and a member of the committee. As the originator of the Transitional Care Model, Dr. Naylor has addressed the unique needs of older adults and their caregivers, offering evidence-based solutions. "We need to address the physical, psychological, financial and emotional tolls on caregivers by developing more effective ways to prepare and support them."

The authors noted potential improvements to [cancer care](#) among older persons, including:

- Passing new laws extending the time period for clinical trials (similar to laws passed for pediatric patients) in order to include more older adults, noting that "although the majority of patients with cancer and [cancer survivors](#) are older adults, historically they have been and continue to be underrepresented in all types of cancer trials. The result may be that drugs are tested on a younger and fitter population that belies potential health risks to older people who may also have more than one condition;
- Letting the patients decide what works. The authors recommended "publicly reported, robust measures of patient reported outcomes meaningful for this population;" and
- Establishing a national workforce commission "to plan for the challenges of an aging population and the complexity of care required by older adults with cancer, including a workforce that values multidisciplinary teams and geriatrics principles.

More information: "Improving the Quality of Cancer Care in an Aging Population: Recommendations From an IOM Report." Arti Hurria, MD; Mary Naylor, PhD, RN; Harvey Jay Cohen, MD. *JAMA*. 2013;310(17):1795-1796. [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2013.280416](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2013.280416).

Provided by University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing

Citation: Cancer risk for aging Baby Boomers (2013, December 2) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-12-cancer-aging-baby-boomers.html>

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