

Nearly 1 in 20 cancer patients die within month of surgery

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(HealthDay)—In a study of more than 1.1 million cancer patients who had surgery, Harvard researchers found that almost 5 percent died within one month of their operation. These findings are scheduled to be presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's 2014 Quality Care Symposium, held from Oct. 17 to 18 in Boston.

The researchers found that, of the 1.1 million patients diagnosed from 2004 to 2011, 53,498 died within the month after surgery. Specifically, married patients had a 20 percent lower risk of dying within the month

after surgery; insured patients had a 12 percent lower risk; wealthier patients had a 5 percent lower risk; and more-educated patients had a 2 percent lower risk. Conversely, minority patients had a 13 percent higher risk of dying; men had an 11 percent greater risk; older patients had a 2 percent greater risk; and patients with advanced cancer had an 89 percent higher risk.

Patients in the study had some of the most common and deadly cancers, including lung, breast, colorectal, prostate, thyroid, esophageal, pancreatic, endometrial, ovarian, head and neck, liver, bladder and kidney cancer, melanoma, and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. This study is also the first to show that these disparities aren't limited to [older patients](#). Nearly 40 percent of the patients in the study were younger than 65 and not eligible for Medicare, the researchers reported.

"Although there is little consensus as to why disparities in surgical outcomes exist, most of the existing literature cites one particularly alarming finding: minority, poor, uninsured [patients](#) disproportionately receive care at lower quality, underperforming hospitals," lead author Brandon Mahal, a research fellow at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, told *HealthDay*.

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