

Social factors may impact young leukemia patients' survival

September 14 2015



A Wright's stained bone marrow aspirate smear from a patient with precursor B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Credit: VashiDonsk/Wikipedia

A new study reveals that insurance status, marital status, and county-level income may affect the chances of survival in young patients with acute myelogenous leukemia (AML). Published early online in *Cancer*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society, the findings indicate that efforts are needed to address the social factors that impact

critical aspects of health in these patients.

AML will affect approximately 20,830 and kill 10,460 Americans in 2015. Tremendous progress has been made in identifying disease characteristics that cause a patient to have a higher or lower chance of cure following intense treatment, which often involves bone marrow transplantation. Now investigators at the University of Alabama at Birmingham have analyzed a database with 5,541 patients younger than 65 years of age to demonstrate that, in addition to age and disease characteristics, other "non-biological" patient characteristics also matter. The study is the largest to date to look at [socioeconomic factors](#) in outcomes of younger patients with AML.

Patients who were single or divorced, patients who were uninsured or were Medicaid beneficiaries, and patients who lived in areas with lower income had substantially elevated risks of dying prematurely. "We believe these three factors indicate lack of material and social support preventing young patients from successfully walking the long and difficult road towards a cure," said Uma Borate, MD, lead author of the study, and assistant professor in the UAB Division of Hematology and Oncology.

The findings show that factors not necessarily related to care can have significant impacts on AML patients' outcomes. "As physicians, we often emphasize more of the biology of the cancer, especially with the recent focus on personalized medicine. But we need to pay the same attention to resources available to our patients, as this greatly impacts their chances to survive leukemia," said senior author Luciano Jose Costa, MD, PhD, associate professor in the UAB Division of Hematology and Oncology.

This will be especially important as the U.S. transitions to a healthcare system that ties physician and hospital payments to patient outcomes.

"Taking from the results of this study, factors that have nothing to do with quality of care need to be accounted for when comparing predicted with actual outcomes—otherwise we will create a disincentive for hospitals and doctors to care for less privileged [patients](#)," said Dr. Borate.

More information: "Non-biological factors affecting survival in younger patients with acute myeloid leukemia." Uma Borate, Shin Mineishi, and Luciano Jose Costa. *Cancer*; Published Online: September 14, 2015. [DOI: 10.1002/cncr.29436](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.29436)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Social factors may impact young leukemia patients' survival (2015, September 14) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-09-social-factors-impact-young-leukemia.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.