

Low rate of job retention following colorectal cancer diagnosis

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Nearly half of working individuals with stage III colorectal cancer surveyed did not retain their jobs reportedly due to their cancer diagnosis and treatment, according to a study in the December 22/29 issue of *JAMA*. Paid sick leave was associated with a greater likelihood of job retention and reduced personal financial burden.

Workers who develop serious illnesses, such as [colorectal cancer](#) (CRC), can incur economic hardship, regardless of [insurance coverage](#). Paid [sick leave](#) could reduce the need to take unpaid time off during treatment. However, 40 percent of U.S. workers have no paid sick leave. Its provision is not mandated under the Affordable Care Act or the Family Medical Leave Act, nor is it part of health insurance coverage.

Arden M. Morris, M.D., M.P.H., of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and colleagues examined the association between access to paid sick leave and job retention and personal financial burden among patients with CRC. Surveys were mailed to and telephone follow-up conducted with adults with stage III CRC reported to the Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results cancer registries of Georgia and metropolitan Detroit between August 2011 and March 2013. Patients were contacted 4 months postoperatively and could respond up to 12 months postoperatively; only those employed at diagnosis were analyzed.

Among 567 employed respondents (68 percent response rate), 56 percent had access to paid sick leave. Fifty-five percent retained their jobs. Others were newly disabled (26 percent), retired (7 percent), or

unemployed (8 percent) or had found new jobs (4 percent). Those who retained their jobs were significantly more likely to be men, white, married, without other illness, and were more highly educated and were more likely to have a higher annual income, private [health insurance](#), and access to paid sick leave. Fifty-nine percent of respondents with paid sick leave retained their jobs vs 33 percent without paid sick leave.

More information: *JAMA*, [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2015.12383](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2015.12383)

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