

Individuals in US diagnosed with cancer are 2.7 times more likely to declare bankruptcy than individuals without cancer

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As advancements in cancer therapies have been making headlines in recent years, cancer drug prices have significantly increased. The remaining question is, what are the economic impacts of the differentiations in cost of FDA approved drugs and the purchasing power of individuals around the world? This study, published in *Oncotarget*, titled "A global comparison of the cost of patented cancer drugs in relation to global differences in wealth" identifies several critical factors impacting cancer patients.

An international group of researchers, led by Dr. Daniel A. Goldstein, systematically obtained the prices of 8 FDA approved and patented [cancer drugs](#) in seven participating countries, and assessed international differences in wealth by collecting values for [gross domestic product](#) (GDP) per capita in addition to average salaries. To compare affordability of [cancer](#) drugs between countries, [drug](#) prices were converted to US dollars using both foreign exchange rates and [purchasing power](#) parity (PPP) and then dividing the converted drug prices by the markers of wealth.

The researchers found that cancer drug affordability is correlated with wealth, indicating that cancer drug prices were most affordable in high-income countries and least affordable in low-income countries. However, there was one exception in the correlation between income and affordability in the US, which has the highest average monthly price

per patented drug of all countries in the study.

"While the cost and value of cancer drugs have recently gained considerable attention, an additional factor of economic importance must be considered - namely affordability," explained Goldstein. "The high cost of cancer drugs places a [financial burden](#) on both society as well as patients and their families. In the US, individuals diagnosed with cancer are 2.7 times more likely to declare bankruptcy than individuals without cancer."

Important questions arise from this analysis. Should identical drugs have identical prices around the world irrespective of where they are purchased? If they are different, should prices simply be based on market forces or should they be related to wealth in order to provide equivalent levels of affordability worldwide?

Major challenges are expected in the years ahead to pay for the multitude of cancer drugs that have recently been developed, with an uneven financial burden to public and private payers from country to country.

More information: Daniel A. Goldstein et al, A global comparison of the cost of patented cancer drugs in relation to global differences in wealth, *Oncotarget* (2017). [DOI: 10.18632/oncotarget.17742](https://doi.org/10.18632/oncotarget.17742)

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