

Polypharmacy more likely for cancer survivors

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(HealthDay)—Cancer survivors are more likely to be prescribed five or

more unique medications, including drugs with abuse potential, according to a study published online April 12 in *Cancer*.

Caitlin C. Murphy, Ph.D., M.P.H., from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, and colleagues used data from the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey for 5,216 [cancer survivors](#) and 19,588 non-[cancer](#) controls matched by age, sex, and survey year to examine patterns of [prescription medication](#) use and polypharmacy.

The researchers found that, compared with non-cancer controls, a higher percentage of cancer survivors were prescribed five or more unique medications (64 versus 51.5 percent), including drugs with abuse potential. Compared with controls, a higher percentage of newly (one year or less since diagnosis) and previously (more than one year since diagnosis) diagnosed survivors were prescribed medications, with large differences with respect to central nervous system agents (65.8 versus 57.4 versus 46 percent). Benzodiazepines and/or opioids were prescribed to nearly 10 percent of survivors and about 5 percent of controls. Survivors' prescription expenditures were more than double those of controls (median, \$1,633 versus \$784). Across age and comorbidity categories, the findings persisted.

"Cancer survivors were prescribed a higher number of unique medications, including drugs with abuse potential, thereby increasing their risk of [adverse drug events](#), financial toxicity, poor adherence, and drug-drug interactions," the authors write.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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