

ASCO: undertreatment seen for women with head and neck cancer

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(HealthDay)—Females with head and neck cancer (HNC) are less likely

to receive intensive chemotherapy and radiation, and have an increased relative risk for death from HNC versus other causes, according to a study presented at the annual meeting of the American Society for Clinical Oncology, held from June 1 to 5 in Chicago.

Annie Park, M.D., from Kaiser Permanente in Santa Clara, Calif., and colleagues identified 884 HNC patients diagnosed from 2000 to 2015 from the Kaiser Permanente Northern California cancer registry. Health outcomes were assessed for the 223 female and 661 male patients with stage II to IVB HNC.

The researchers found that 271 patients died of cancer and 93 died of non-cancer causes with a median follow-up of 2.9 years. Females were significantly less likely than males to receive [intensive chemotherapy](#) (35 versus 46 percent) and radiation (60 versus 70 percent). In generalized competing event analysis, the relative hazard ratio for death from HNC versus other causes was increased for female patients (adjusted relative hazard ratio, 1.92), indicating that [female patients](#) may be undertreated.

"We weren't looking for gender differences, so the results were really surprising," a coauthor said in a statement. "Besides undertreatment, there are a number of factors that could contribute to the differences in outcomes between women and men with head and [neck cancer](#), and it's clear we need further investigation."

Two authors disclosed financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

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