

## Seniors who develop cancer have better memory, slower decline

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(HealthDay)—Older individuals who develop cancer have better

memory and slower memory decline than those who remain cancer-free, according to a study published online June 21 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Monica Ospina-Romero, M.D., from the University of California in San Francisco, and colleagues compared long-term memory trajectories in patients before and after they developed incident [cancer](#) to those of similarly aged individuals not diagnosed with cancer. Data were included for 14,583 U.S. adults born before 1949 with no cancer history.

The researchers found that 2,250 participants had a [cancer diagnosis](#) and 12,333 had no cancer diagnosis during a mean follow-up of 11.5 years. In the decade before a cancer diagnosis, the rate of memory decline was 10.5 percent (95 percent confidence interval [CI], 6.2 to 14.9 percent), which was slower than memory decline in similarly aged individuals without cancer diagnosis. The mean memory function immediately before diagnosis was 0.096 [standard deviation](#) (SD) units (95 percent CI, 0.060 to 0.133 SD units) higher for individuals diagnosed at 75 years of age versus similarly aged cancer-free individuals. Compared with memory before diagnosis, a new cancer diagnosis correlated with a short-term memory decline of  $-0.058$  SD units (95 percent CI,  $-0.084$  to  $-0.032$  SD units). The rate of memory decline was 3.9 percent (95 percent CI, 0.9 to 6.9 percent) slower after diagnosis in individuals with versus without a cancer diagnosis.

"These novel findings support the possibility of a common pathologic process working in opposite directions in cancer and Alzheimer disease," the authors write. "Identification of a potential association between carcinogenesis and neurodegeneration may open a new avenue in research for prevention and treatment of Alzheimer disease."

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)  
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