

Study examines cancer's effects on young women's employment and finances

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Cancer and its treatment can impact an individual's ability to work, and employment disruptions can lead to financial hardships. A new study indicates that women who were diagnosed with cancer as adolescents or young adults can be especially vulnerable to these effects. The findings are published early online in *CANCER*, a peer-reviewed journal of the American Cancer Society (ACS).

For the study, Clare Meernik, MPH, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her colleagues surveyed 1,328 [young women](#) in North Carolina and California who were diagnosed with cancer between the ages of 15 to 39 years and were employed at the time of their cancer diagnosis. Surveys were conducted a median of seven years after diagnosis, and questions in the survey assessed the impact of one's cancer diagnosis and treatment in relation to a broad range of survivorship topics.

Survey results revealed that 32 percent of the [women](#) experienced employment disruption, meaning that they stopped working or worked fewer hours following their cancer diagnosis. Twenty-seven percent of women in the study reported that they had to borrow money, go into debt, or file for bankruptcy because of their [cancer treatment](#); and women with disrupted employment had a 17-percentage point higher prevalence of reporting this than women without disrupted employment.

Also, 50 percent of women in the study reported [psychological distress](#) about having to pay large medical bills related to their cancer treatment,

and women with disrupted employment had an 8-percentage point higher prevalence of reporting this than women without disrupted employment.

"Our study addresses the burden of employment disruption and financial hardship among young women with cancer—a group who may be at particular risk for poor financial outcomes after cancer given their age and gender," said Meernik. "Our findings highlight the need for effective interventions to promote job maintenance and transition back to the workforce after cancer treatment, as well as increased workplace accommodations and benefits, to improve cancer outcomes for young women."

More information: *CANCER* (2020). [DOI: 10.1002/cncr.33190](https://doi.org/10.1002/cncr.33190)

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