

# Physical conditions linked to psychological distress in patients with cancer

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Among patients with cancer, having additional physical comorbidities was linked with a higher risk of experiencing psychological distress. The finding comes from a *Psycho-Oncology* analysis of 2017 data from the National Health Survey of Spain.

The analysis included 484 patients who reported a [cancer diagnosis](#) and

484 matched controls without a history of cancer. Compared with controls, patients with cancer reported more physical comorbidities, including [chronic back pain](#), asthma, chronic bronchitis, urinary incontinence, prostate problems, and kidney problems. They also reported higher psychological distress and were more likely to have consulted a mental healthcare professional in the past year.

Thirty percent of patients with cancer reported significant psychological distress but only 10% had consulted a professional. Each additional physical comorbidity was associated with a 9% higher odds that patients with cancer would report having high [psychological distress](#) and a 21% higher odds that they would have consulted a mental healthcare professional.

"Comorbidities often influence the choice and management of cancer treatment. These results suggest that they could also be important for patients' [mental health](#) in the months following diagnosis," said the first author Dafina Petrova, Ph.D., of the Andalusian School of Public Health, in Spain.

**More information:** *Psycho-Oncology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/pon.5632](https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.5632)

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