

# Socioeconomic status plays a major role in cognitive outcomes after childhood cancer

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Childhood cancer and its treatment can result in cognitive struggles. Scientists at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital are studying the risk factors. They looked at social and economic issues in children with brain

tumors treated with radiation.

These patients have the greatest risk of cognitive problems. Scientists followed a group of St. Jude patients for 10 years. The children all had conformal radiation therapy.

For each patient, researchers looked at certain factors. These included the parent's job, education level, and whether it was a single parent home. The children were from different backgrounds.

The findings show social and [economic status](#) is linked to IQ, academics, attention and self-care skills before treatment. The study also shows that this gap widens over time.

"What was most surprising was that for some measures, the contribution of socioeconomic status was even greater than age at treatment, which has typically been the biggest risk factor," said Heather Conklin, Ph.D., of St. Jude Psychology.

**More information:** Victoria A Torres et al, The Impact of Socioeconomic Status (SES) on Cognitive Outcomes Following Radiotherapy for Pediatric Brain Tumors: A Prospective, Longitudinal Trial, *Neuro-Oncology* (2021). [DOI: 10.1093/neuonc/noab018](https://doi.org/10.1093/neuonc/noab018)

Provided by St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

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