

Cancer deaths due to COVID-19 explored in March to December 2020

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From March to December 2020, more than 16,500 deaths occurred in

cancer patients with complications of COVID-19, according to a research letter published online Sept. 29 in *JAMA Oncology*.

Xuesong Han, Ph.D., from the American Cancer Society in Atlanta, and colleagues quantified deaths that occurred between March 1, 2020, and Dec. 31, 2020, caused by both COVID-19 and [cancer](#).

The researchers identified 3,142 cancer deaths with COVID-19 as a contributing cause and 13,419 COVID-19 deaths with cancer as a contributing cause. Deaths caused by both cancer and COVID-19 versus non-COVID-19-related cancer deaths were more likely to occur in large central metropolitan areas; in November or December; among individuals aged 85 years or older; among American Indian or Alaska Native, Black, or Hispanic racial and [ethnic groups](#); and in inpatient or nursing home or long-term care settings. The percentage of COVID-19-related cancer deaths and cancer-related COVID-19 deaths was higher among [individuals](#) with hematologic neoplasms compared with non-COVID-19-related cancer deaths (13.7 and 25.5 percent, respectively, versus 9.5 percent). Prostate cancer was more prevalent among deaths caused by both cancer and COVID-19.

"We know that [cancer patients](#) are at a higher risk of contracting COVID-19 due to weakened immune systems," Han said in a statement. "It is important to further study these patient populations to develop care strategies that reduce the risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus as well as optimize disease management for patients with comorbid COVID-19 infection."

Two authors disclosed financial ties to AstraZeneca.

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

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