

# Integrating mental health services into oncology treatment protocols

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Study participant is interviewed. Credit: The City University of New York

A new study by CUNY SPH doctoral student Thinkh Vu and colleagues

reveals that cancer inpatients experience high levels of symptoms related to depression and anxiety, as well as significant impairment in mobility and daily activities.

In the study, Vu, along with Professor Victoria Ngo, Postdoctoral Fellow Marina Weiss and others highlight the importance of integrating mental health services into existing oncology treatment protocols.

Participants reported the greatest impairment in mobility and [daily activities](#), especially among those with gastrointestinal cancers, undergoing [radiation therapy](#) alone, reporting higher levels of depression and anxiety, and lower levels of self-reported health status.

Patients with higher depression and anxiety symptoms and functional impairment also reported greater barriers to mental health services, underscoring the need to address barriers to the provision of mental health care for [cancer patients](#).

Attitudinal-related barriers, such as wanting to solve mental health concerns alone and believing they would resolve on their own, were particularly prevalent.

"To address these attitudes and improve access to [mental health services](#), it is essential to increase mental health literacy and decrease the stigma surrounding mental illness," says Vu. "Our findings suggest that employing highly trained and sensitive staff to assess and educate patients may be acceptable to the majority of patients."

The paper is published in the journal *Psycho-Oncology*.

**More information:** Thinh Toan Vu et al, Mental Health, Functional Impairment, and Barriers to Mental Health Access Among Cancer Patients in Vietnam, *Psycho-Oncology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/pon.6114](https://doi.org/10.1002/pon.6114)

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