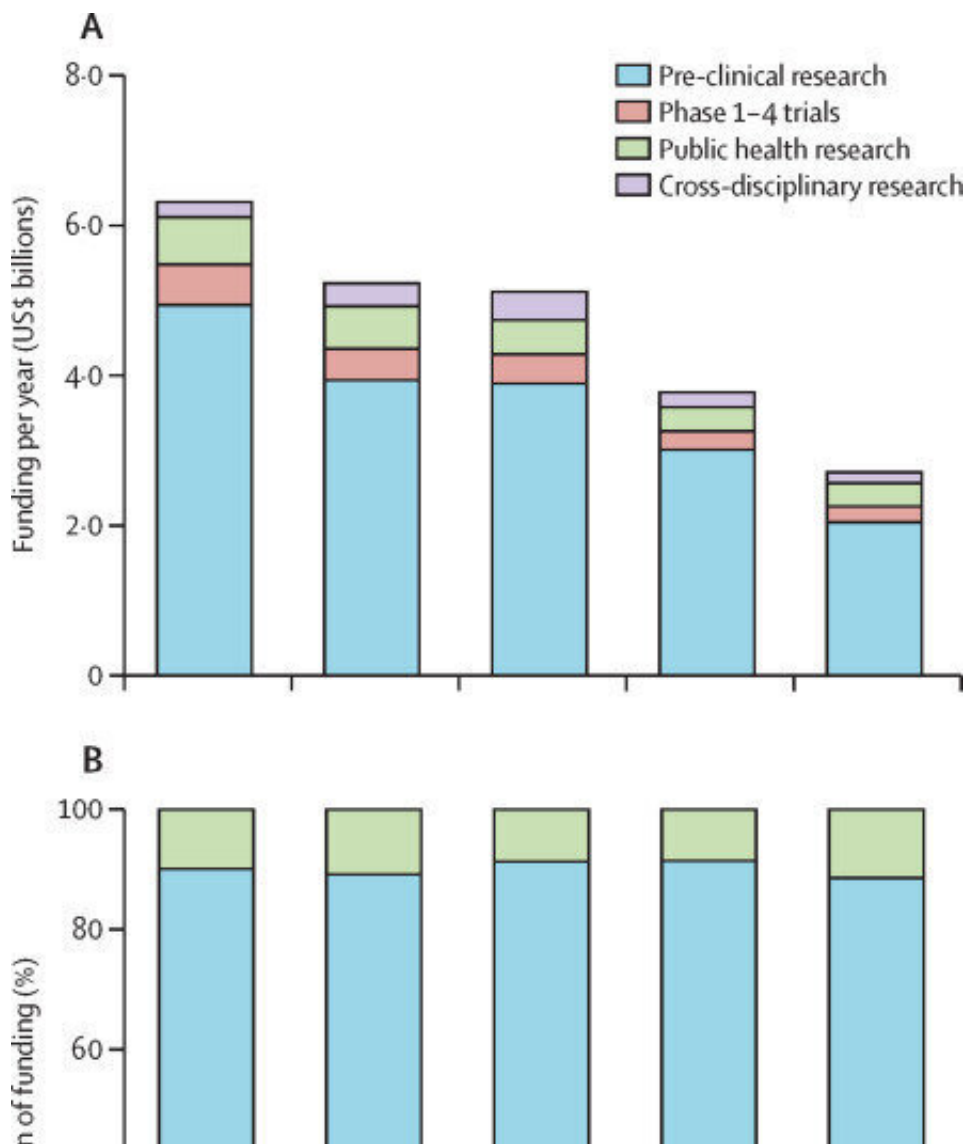


Billions spent on cancer research but only small percentage goes to treatment, study shows

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Funding per year by type of science (A) and proportion of funding per year by

type of science (B). Credit: *The Lancet Oncology* (2023). DOI: 10.1016/S1470-2045(23)00182-1

Only a small percentage of cancer research funding gets invested into primary treatments, a study by the University of Southampton and Queen's University Belfast has revealed.

The investigation, published in the journal *Lancet Oncology*, represents the first comprehensive global analysis of [cancer](#) research funding, covering approximately \$24.5 billion of global investment, from 66,388 public and philanthropic awards between 2016 and 2020.

Results of the Southampton and Queens study showed that treatments such as surgery receives just 1.4 percent of funding, and radiotherapy only 2.8 percent, meaning little direct benefit for patients.

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide. GLOBOCAN estimates that in 2020 almost 10 million deaths were deemed attributable to cancer and 19.3 million new cancer cases were diagnosed, a value projected to increase to 28.4 million by 2040.

Dr. Michael Head, Senior Clinical Research Fellow at the University of Southampton, co-led the study. He said, "There will be long-term consequences of the pandemic on other areas of health, including cancer. We need to understand the worst of the [knowledge gaps](#), which can potentially be filled with new research. Our analysis can help cancer experts better set priority areas for funding, ultimately for the benefit of future cancer patients."

The study provides crucial information and recommendations for agencies that fund cancer research globally, policymakers, and those

developing cancer research funding strategies.

Cancer research works to understand evolving patterns of cancer burden and to inform policies aimed at providing more effective, efficient, and equitable care. However, there is an urgent need to review research investment priorities globally to align with population needs to ensure finite

Dr. Stuart McIntosh, Clinical Reader from the Patrick G Johnston Centre for Cancer Research at Queen's University Belfast, led the study. He said, "Our analysis has shown that current cancer research investment does not align well with either the current global distribution of cancer (including overarching cancer control strategies), nor with the main treatments that are used for patients with cancer. There is an urgent need to look at research funding priorities globally to ensure that finite resources can be used to maximize patient benefit."

The study showed almost three quarters of cancer research [funding](#) is dedicated to pre-clinical or medicinal research, not directly involving patients. Although pre-clinical research has inherent value in improving the knowledge and understanding of cancer, there are usually lengthy delays translating this to patient benefit, with time lags of up to 17 years cited.

Compared with previous studies, the researchers also demonstrated cancer research investment is decreasing year on year, with a larger drop in 2020 corresponding to the start of the COVID pandemic.

Despite the known rapidly increasing burden of cancer in [low-income](#) and [middle-income countries](#), only a fraction of [cancer research](#) investment is into cancer as a global health problem.

More information: Stuart A McIntosh et al, Global funding for cancer

research between 2016 and 2020: a content analysis of public and philanthropic investments, *The Lancet Oncology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/S1470-2045\(23\)00182-1](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1470-2045(23)00182-1)

Provided by University of Southampton

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