

Number of cancer treatments provided decreased in first year of COVID-19

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In the first year of the pandemic, there was a significant decrease in the

number of cancer treatments provided, resulting from a decrease in the number of cancer diagnoses, according to a study published online Nov. 9 in *JAMA Oncology*.

Leticia M. Nogueira, Ph.D., M.P.H., from the American Cancer Society in Kennesaw, Georgia, and colleagues examined changes in the absolute number, proportion, and cancer treatment modalities provided to newly diagnosed [patients](#) during the first year of the pandemic. Historical data were used to calculate the expected number of procedures for each treatment modality in 2020.

Overall, 3,504,342 patients were included: 1,214,918 in 2018; 1,235,584 in 2019; and 1,053,840 in 2020. The researchers found that in 2020, there were approximately 98,000 fewer curative intent surgeries performed, 38,800 fewer chemotherapy regimens, 55,500 fewer radiation therapies initiated, 6,800 fewer immunotherapy regimens, and 32,000 fewer hormonal therapies initiated compared with expected treatment from previous years' trends.

No significant change was seen in the type of cancer treatment provided during the first year of the pandemic for the majority of cancer sites and stages evaluated, with the exception of a significant decrease in the proportion of patients receiving breast-conserving surgery and [radiation therapy](#) and a significant increase in the proportion undergoing mastectomy for stage I breast cancer during the first months of the pandemic.

"The decreases are likely resulting from the decrease in the number of patients diagnosed with [cancer](#), not changes in treatment strategy," the authors write.

More information: Leticia M. Nogueira et al, Assessment of Changes in Cancer Treatment During the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic

in the US, *JAMA Oncology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamaoncol.2023.4513](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaoncol.2023.4513)

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