

# Heading off financial harms in cancer patients

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A screening tool can quickly identify cancer patients at risk of financial toxicity, new findings from Columbia Nursing researchers show.

Most [cancer patients](#) experience financial toxicity or difficulty related to the cost of medical care, which is associated with worse outcomes and higher mortality, Assistant Professor Melissa Beauchemin, Ph.D. '19, and her colleagues explained in their report in the January issue of [Oncology Nursing Forum](#).

They evaluated the Comprehensive Score for Financial Toxicity (COST), an 11-item questionnaire, in 50 women with [breast cancer](#). Twenty-seven of the women met the criteria for financial toxicity, meaning a COST score below 22. Most of the study participants had a [college education](#), and nearly half had commercial insurance.

"Awareness of financial toxicity, its prevalence and implications, and potential strategies to mitigate this problem are important to providing high-quality cancer care," Beauchemin and her colleagues note. "Real action will require multilevel modifications involving not only the patient, family, and clinicians, but also the institutional and policy levels to address the upstream causes of financial toxicity, including adverse social determinants of health and structural inequities."

**More information:** Melissa Beauchemin et al, A Brief Screening Tool for Assessment of Financial Toxicity, *Oncology Nursing Forum* (2024). [DOI: 10.1188/24.ONF.17-23](https://doi.org/10.1188/24.ONF.17-23)

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