

Cancer is a disease of aging, but studies of older adults sorely lacking, review suggests

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A systemic review of the current body of research shows that investigators have inadequately addressed the intersection of aging, health disparities, and cancer outcomes among older adults. This is the conclusion of a [paper](#) published in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society*, and led by Nikesha Gilmore, Ph.D., a member of Wilmot Cancer Institute at the University of Rochester.

As the population of survivors of [cancer](#) 65 and older will likely double in size during the next two decades, the review reveals an urgent need for research to address biases impacting cancer outcomes in older people.

A lack of studies focused on disparities, as well as policies and targeted interventions to improve health equity, "perpetuates cancer inequities and leaves the cancer care system ill-equipped to address the unique needs of the rapidly growing and increasingly diverse older adult cancer population," the team concluded.

Promoting and conducting this type of research is a central theme at Wilmot: The 27-county Rochester region from which the [cancer center](#) draws patients has a high percentage (18%) of people 65 and older, a rate that is higher than state and national averages. The region also has a higher cancer incidence rate than in New York state and the nation.

Gilmore, an assistant professor of Surgery at the University of Rochester Medical Center and member of Wilmot's Cancer Prevention and Control (CPC) research program, is lead co-author of the report with Shakira J. Grant MBBS, of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The review team also included Gilmore's mentor and senior co-author of the paper Supriya Mohile, MD, and members of the national Cancer and Aging Research Group. The scoping review included articles published between 2016 and 2023; Nancy Lundebjerg, CEO of the American

Geriatrics Society, lauded the work.

Internally at URMC, Gilmore is also involved extensively in efforts to promote diversity and train the next generation to identify key areas of future investigation. For example, she launched an immersive [student enrichment program called EmREACH](#), in collaboration with a handful of peers at Wilmot and the CPC.

The goal is to remove barriers for underrepresented undergraduate students who are interested in science and medicine by pairing them with mentors, teaching them how to write manuscripts, and introducing them to [clinical research](#) and professional development opportunities.

More information: Nikesha Gilmore et al, A scoping review of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and geographic disparities in the outcomes of older adults with cancer, *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/jgs.18881](https://doi.org/10.1111/jgs.18881)

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