

# Caring for child with cancer increases mental health care utilization for parents

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Privately insured parents caring for a child with cancer have a higher likelihood of utilizing mental health (MH) care than other parents, according to a study published online in *JAMA Network Open*.

Xin Hu, Ph.D., from the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, and

colleagues assessed the use of MH services among parents of children with versus without [cancer](#). The analysis included data from 4,837 families of children with cancer and 24,185 families of children without cancer identified using the Merative MarketScan Commercial Claims Database.

The researchers found that the probabilities of parents having anxiety-related visits (10.6 versus 7.0 percent), depression-related visits (8.4 versus 6.1 percent), and any MH-related visits (18.1 versus 13.3 percent) were higher in families of children with versus without cancer. The probabilities of one or both parents having anxiety-related visits, depression-related visits, and any MH-related visits showed absolute increases of 3.2 percentage points (45.7 percent relative increase), 2.2 percentage points (36.1 percent relative increase), and 4.2 percentage points (31.3 percent relative increase), respectively, in adjusted analyses among families of children with versus without cancer. Magnitudes of such differences were greater among mothers than fathers.

"These findings suggest that targeted interventions to provide [counseling](#) and support are warranted to better meet MH care needs among [parents](#) and caregivers of children with cancer," the authors write.

**More information:** Xin Hu et al, Mental Health Care Utilization Among Parents of Children With Cancer, *JAMA Network Open* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.4531](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2024.4531)

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