

# Survival benefit for cancer trial participants does not persist in adjusted analyses

May 22 2024, by Elana Gotkine

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In studies using designs addressing sources of bias and confounding, there is no evidence of a survival benefit for cancer trial participants, [according to a study](#) published online May 20 in the *Journal of the*

*American Medical Association* to coincide with the annual meeting of the Society for Clinical Trials, held May 19–22 in Boston.

Renata Iskander, from McGill University in Montreal, and colleagues conducted a [systematic review](#) and meta-analysis to examine whether patient participation in [clinical trials](#) is associated with greater survival benefit than usual care using data from 39 publications comprising 85 comparisons of trial participants and routine-care patients.

The researchers found that when all studies were pooled, regardless of design or quality, trial participants had a statistically significant overall survival benefit (hazard ratio [HR], 0.76; 95 percent confidence interval [CI], 0.69 to 0.82).

However, in study subsets that matched trial participants and routine-care patients for [eligibility criteria](#), survival benefits were attenuated (HR, 0.85; 95 percent CI, 0.75 to 0.97). When only high-quality studies were pooled, the benefits disappeared (HR, 0.91; 95 percent CI, 0.80 to 1.05). When estimates were adjusted for potential publication bias, benefits also disappeared (HR, 0.94; 95 percent CI, 0.86 to 1.03).

"These findings may strike some trial advocates as discouraging, given how hard they work to improve patient outcomes within trials," the authors write. "However, a more reassuring interpretation is that there is no evidence that excluding patients from trials due to geography, nonavailability of trials in their condition, or ineligibility deprives them of survival opportunities."

**More information:** Renata Iskander et al, Survival Benefit Associated With Participation in Clinical Trials of Anticancer Drugs, *JAMA* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2024.6281](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2024.6281)

Brooke E. Wilson et al, Study Participants, Future Patients, and Outcomes That Matter in Cancer Clinical Trials, *JAMA* (2024). [DOI: 10.1001/jama.2024.1281](https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2024.1281)

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