

Recent cancer diagnosis associated with increased risk of mental health disorders

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A recent cancer diagnosis was associated with increased risk for some mental health disorders and increased use of psychiatric medications, according to a new study published online by *JAMA Oncology* that used data from Swedish population and health registers.

Living with [cancer](#) can induce severe psychological stress and being diagnosed with cancer is stressful. Co-existing psychiatric conditions are common among patients with cancer.

Donghao Lu, M.D., of the Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, and coauthors investigated changes in risk for several common and potentially stress-related mental disorders, including depression, anxiety, substance abuse, somatoform/conversion disorder and stress reaction/adjustment disorder, from the cancer diagnostic workup through to post [diagnosis](#).

The study included 304,118 patients with cancer and more than 3 million cancer-free individuals randomly selected from the Swedish population for comparison.

The study found an increased risk of some [mental health disorders](#) from 10 months before cancer diagnosis that peaked during the first week after diagnosis and then decreased after that, although the risk remained elevated at 10 years after diagnosis.

The use of [psychiatric medications](#) for patients with cancer also was examined to assess milder [mental health](#) conditions and symptoms. The authors report there was increased use of psychiatric medications from one month before diagnosis that peaked at about three months after diagnosis among patients with cancer and remained elevated two years after diagnosis.

"Our findings support the existing guidelines of integrating psychological management into cancer

care and call for extended vigilance for multiple mental disorders starting from the time of the cancer diagnostic workup," the authors conclude.

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