

High cost of new cancer drugs in US not related to their effectiveness, study shows

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The high costs of recently licensed cancer medicines in the United States—as compared with those in Australia, France and the UK—do not translate into improved survival, quality of life, or safety for patients, according to new research from the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE).

The paper, published in the journal *Social Science and Medicine* shows that in the US, new drugs cost, in their first year of marketing, on average, US\$68,255 per each patient's course of treatment. This makes them between 1.2 and 1.9 times more expensive than in Australia, France and the UK where [costs](#) average US\$35,499, US\$35,114, and US\$55,616 respectively.

The researchers found no relationship between the [high costs](#) of these drugs in the US and their overall survival and quality of life benefits for patients.

In the UK anti-cancer medicines were relatively expensive but their costs were related—albeit weakly—to their overall and [quality of life](#) benefits to patients.

Cancer drug costs were generally lower in France and predictive, again weakly, of their clinical benefits to patients.

Australian medicines were comparatively inexpensive, yet their costs for treatment was unrelated to their clinical benefits.

Dr. Sebastian Salas-Vega, a Fellow in LSE's Department of Health Policy and lead author of the paper, said: "Prices have risen faster for cancer drugs in recent years than those associated with most other diseases.

"While some may justify high prices if new medicines offer equally large clinical benefits, our research shows that new anti-cancer medicines may sometimes be both costly and unrelated to their success as clinical therapies, particularly in the US.

"These findings suggest that some degree of governmental oversight—perhaps, as is used in the UK and France—may play an

appropriate role in managing this cost-benefit gap. Doing so may help improve access for patients today and motivate the development of better therapies for them in the future."

More information: Sebastian Salas-Vega et al. Relationship Between Costs and Clinical Benefits of New Cancer Medicines in Australia, France, the UK, and the US, *Social Science & Medicine* (2020). [DOI: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113042](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113042)

Provided by London School of Economics

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