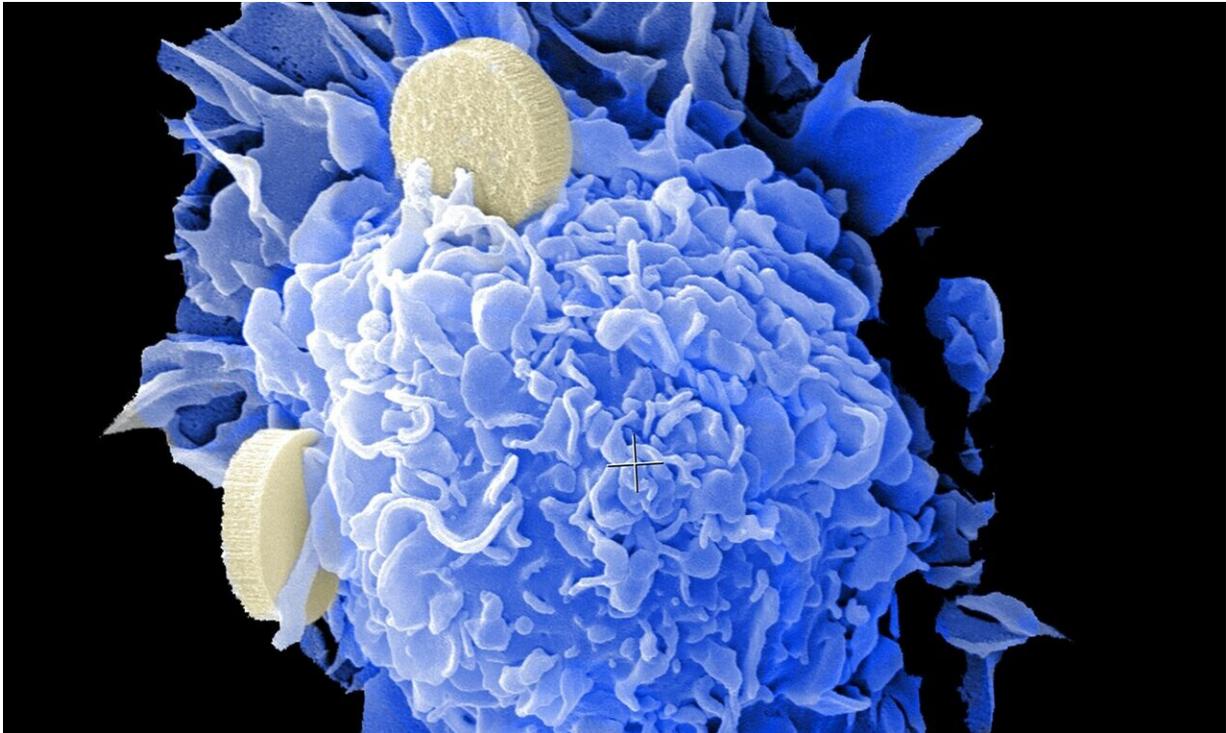


# Cancer diagnoses down during the pandemic

September 10 2021

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

(HealthDay)—There was a significant decline in newly identified patients with eight common types of cancer in the first and third pandemic periods (spring and winter months), according to a research letter published online Aug. 31 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Harvey W. Kaufman, M.D., from Quest Diagnostics in Secaucus, New

Jersey, and colleagues evaluated laboratory test orders for any cause from January 2018 through March 2021 among patients with physician-assigned diagnosis codes for any of eight cancer types (breast, colorectal, lung, pancreatic, cervical, gastric, esophageal, or prostate). Monthly trends for test orders were evaluated for prepandemic (January 2019 to February 2020) and pandemic periods 1 (March to May 2020), 2 (June to October 2020), and 3 (November 2020 to March 2021).

The researchers found that prepandemic, the mean monthly number of patients with newly identified cancer was highest for prostate (13,214), followed by breast (9,583), colorectal (4,101), lung (3,015), pancreatic (1,177), cervical (493), gastric (415), and esophageal (409) cancer. The mean monthly number of new diagnoses of all cancer types combined fell 29.8 percent during the first pandemic period, with significant declines for all cancer types, ranging from 21.2 percent for pancreatic to 36.1 percent for breast. The mean monthly [number](#) of patients newly diagnosed with [cancer](#) during the second pandemic period showed a 9.6 percent decrease for all cancers combined, which was statistically the same level as in the prepandemic period, except prostate. Mean monthly patient numbers were again significantly lower in the third [pandemic](#) period (19.1 percent decrease) versus the prepandemic [period](#) for all cancers.

"Our findings call for planning to address the consequences of delayed diagnoses, including strengthened clinical telehealth offerings supporting patient-clinician interactions," the authors write.

All authors are employees of Quest Diagnostics.

**More information:** [Abstract/Full Text](#)

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