

Study of Cancer Patients and COVID-19 Highlights Health Disparities

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DETROIT, July 22, 2021 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Findings from a study led by researchers at [Henry Ford Cancer Institute](#), in collaboration with [Advocate Aurora Health](#), the [Food and Drug Administration](#) and [Syapse®](#), show an elevated risk for severe COVID-19 effects or death among patients with cancer, with the highest risk being among low-income and Black patients.

Researchers who led the study, which was recently published in [Cancer Reports](#), analyzed data from 146,702 adults diagnosed with cancer between 2015 and 2020. From this group, 1,267 COVID-19 cases were identified between February 1 and July 30, 2020. The data analyzed was part of the [Syapse® Learning Health Network](#), which is a global precision oncology data sharing network that aims to improve cancer care across communities by using real-world data to support clinical decisions.

As part of the study, researchers analyzed treatments and clinical outcomes for patients with COVID-19. Among hospitalized patients, the most common admission diagnoses were similar for patients with active cancer (first diagnosed or received anticancer treatment within the last 12 months) and those with a history of cancer. Breathing abnormalities were more common for males than females among hospitalized patients (). Patients in zip codes with median household income below \$30,000 were nearly twice as likely as patients in zip codes with median household income above \$30,000 to be hospitalized for pneumonia, fluid balance disorders, cough, respiratory failure, or acute renal failure. Additionally, findings from the study show Black patients were more likely than other groups to be admitted for breathing abnormalities, pneumonia, fluid balance disorders, cough, acute renal failure or chronic kidney disease, and fever.

“The data analyzed demonstrates health disparities related to both race and income that are multi-factorial and already well-recognized in the U.S.,” said [Clara Hwang, M.D.](#), medical oncologist at Henry Ford Cancer Institute and principal investigator of the study at Henry Ford. “Our hope is these findings will help inform the care provided for those who are at a higher risk of complications or death from COVID-19, and lead to continued research that will help us better understand why this disproportionate effect on Black patients exists.”

Black patients with cancer and separately those living in zip codes with median household income less than \$30,000 were at the highest risk of severe COVID-19 effects or death.

“The findings from this study show that patients with cancer are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, especially those with comorbidities and cancer that has been diagnosed in the past 12 months,” said [Shirish Gadgeel, M.D.](#), division head of Hematology/Oncology at Henry Ford Cancer Institute, and co-author of the study. “We found that people with cancer who were diagnosed with COVID-19 were more likely to have other chronic underlying illnesses compared to patients with cancer without COVID-19, such as chronic conditions affecting the kidneys, heart, lungs and blood vessels. Our findings indicate older people with cancer were more likely to die from COVID-19, which is consistent with what has been observed among those without cancer.”

At Henry Ford, patients with cancer and other high-risk conditions were prioritized to receive the COVID-19 vaccine when it became available for each age group. To protect those at risk of the most severe complications or death from COVID-19, including patients with cancer, Henry Ford

implemented [enhanced safety measures](#), which facilitated seamless care of cancer patients during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The enhanced safety measures implemented include patients being prescreened by phone for COVID-19 symptoms the day before their appointment, as well as additional screening at building entrances; maintaining six-foot spacing between chairs in the infusion room; blood work being done in the infusion room to save patients a trip to the lab, and both in-person and virtual visits offered for patients.

A key part of making this study possible is the [partnership between Henry Ford and Syapse](#), which was created in 2016.

Through this partnership, Henry Ford shares deidentified cancer outcomes data with other health systems through the Syapse Learning Health Network, which enables more rapid learning from real-world experiences to improve patient care around the globe. Henry Ford Cancer Institute provides world-class cancer care to nearly 10,000 new patients each year, and comprises more than 1,450 cancer care experts at five hospitals, 11 outpatient facilities and hundreds of aligned doctor's offices throughout Southeast and Southcentral Michigan.

Although this study characterized the impact of race and socioeconomic status in one of the largest U.S. cohorts of patients with cancer and COVID-19 reported to-date, similar associations have been reported in non-cancer populations. Further research is needed to study the underlying causes of COVID-19's disproportionate effect among minority populations and patients residing in lower income areas, as well as the long-term effects of COVID-19 on patients with cancer.

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About Henry Ford Health System

Founded in 1915 by Henry Ford himself, Henry Ford Health System is a non-profit, integrated health system committed to improving people's lives through excellence in the science and art of healthcare and healing. Henry Ford Health System includes Henry Ford Medical Group, with more than 1,900 physicians and researchers practicing in more than 50 specialties at locations throughout Southeast and Central Michigan. Acute care hospitals include Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, MI and Henry Ford Allegiance Health in Jackson, MI – both Magnet® hospitals; Henry Ford Macomb Hospital; Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital; and Henry Ford Wyandotte Hospital.

The largest of these is Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, a quaternary care research and teaching hospital and Level 1 Trauma Center recognized for clinical excellence in cardiology, cardiovascular surgery, neurology, neurosurgery, and multi-organ transplants. The health system also provides comprehensive, best-in-class care for cancer at the Brigitte Harris Cancer Pavilion, and orthopedics and sports medicine at the William Clay Ford Center for Athletic Medicine – both in Detroit.

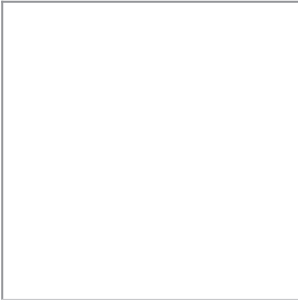
As one of the nation's leading academic medical centers, Henry Ford Health System annually trains more than 3,000 medical students, residents, and fellows in more than 50 accredited programs, and has trained nearly 40% of the state's physicians. Our dedication to education and research is supported by nearly \$100 million in annual grants from the National Institutes of Health and other public and private foundations.

Henry Ford's not-for-profit health plan, Health Alliance Plan (HAP), provides health coverage for more than 540,000 people.

Henry Ford Health System employs more than 33,000 people, including more than 1,600 physicians, more than 6,600 nurses and 5,000 allied health professionals.

About Syapse

Syapse is a company dedicated to extinguishing the fear and burden of serious disease by advancing real-world care. By marrying clinical expertise with smart technologies, we transform data into evidence—and then into experience—in collaboration with our network of partners, who are committed to improving patients' lives through community health systems. Together, we connect comprehensive patient insights to our network, to empower our partners in driving real impact and improving access to high-quality care.



Source: Syapse