

1 in 5 Cancer Survivors Suffers Chronic Pain, Study Finds



WEDNESDAY, Jan. 19 (HealthDay News) -- More than 40 percent of cancer survivors experience pain, and the risk is highest among black and female patients, finds a new study.

Researchers at the University of Michigan Health System surveyed nearly 200 U.S. cancer survivors and found that 43 percent had experienced pain since their diagnosis, and 20 percent suffered chronic cancer-related pain at least two years later.

Among white patients, the most significant source of pain was cancer surgery (53.8 percent), and among black patients the greatest source of pain was cancer treatment (46.2 percent), according to the report.

In addition, the study found that compared to men, women had more pain, more pain flare-ups, more disability due to pain and were more depressed because of pain.

The authors also noted that black patients were more likely to report greater severity of pain and more pain-related disability, and also expressed more concern about harmful pain treatment side effects.

The study was released online in advance of publication in an upcoming print issue of the journal *Cancer*.

"All in all, the high prevalence of cancer and pain and now chronic cancer pain among these survivors, especially blacks and women, shows there's more work to be done in improving the quality of care and research," lead author and pain medicine specialist Dr. Carmen R. Green, a professor of anesthesiology, obstetrics and gynecology and health management and policy at the University of Michigan, said in a university news release.

Poor pain management may be the result of patient and physician attitudes and lack of knowledge, the researchers suggested. For example, patients and doctors may minimize pain complaints because they're worried about the pain medication side effects, such as addiction, or fear that pain is a sign that the cancer has gotten worse.

"When necessary and appropriate there are a variety of therapies available to address pain and improve [patients'] well-being," Green said.

More information

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about cancer survivorship.

SOURCE: University of Michigan, news release, Jan. 12, 2011

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