

COVID-19 Pandemic

New Cancer Patients

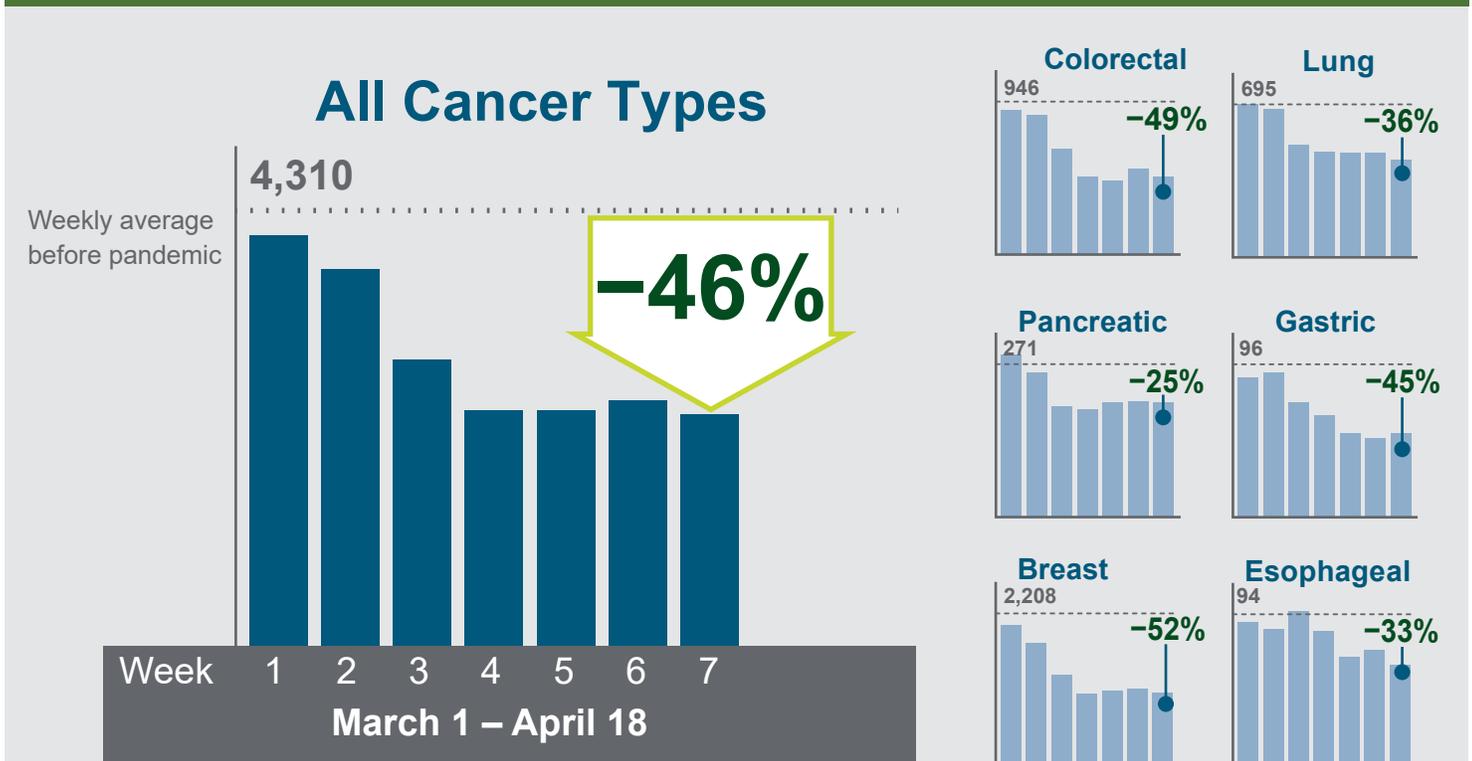
? How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected numbers of newly identified cancer patients?

Background

Decreases in new cancer diagnoses have been reported from several European countries. In the United States, the CDC suggested postponing preventive care, including cancer screenings, which may have had a similar effect.

Results

Newly identified cancer patients



→ Numbers of newly identified cancer patients have dramatically decreased. Planning for the consequences of delayed diagnoses may be warranted.

COVID-19 Pandemic New Cancer Patients

Article Title: “Changes in US Patients Newly Identified With Cancers Before and During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic”

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Background

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicated that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, cancer screening and other prevention services should be postponed unless the risks outweighed the benefits.¹
- Such guidance has affected diagnosis and treatment rates of life-threatening conditions. For example, the number of patients being treated for myocardial infarction decreased 38%.²
- If cancer screening and the resulting diagnoses also decreased, cancers would likely be identified at more advanced stages and have poorer outcomes. Determining if such a decrease occurred may help healthcare providers plan for these situations.
- **Objective:** In this study, investigators examined whether the number of newly identified cancer patients changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Methods

- In this cross-sectional study, patients were included if they were tested at Quest Diagnostics and their ordering physician assigned ICD-10 codes associated with any of 6 cancer types: breast, colorectal, lung, pancreatic, gastric, and esophageal.
- The mean weekly number of newly identified patients was determined for the baseline period (January 6, 2019–February 29, 2020). Weekly numbers for the pandemic period (March 1, 2020–April 18, 2020) were compared to baseline.
- The mean age and sex distribution of patients diagnosed with cancer during the baseline period and pandemic period were compared.

Results

- During the baseline period, the mean weekly number of all newly identified cancer patients was 4,310.
- During the pandemic period studied, the weekly number of all newly identified cancer patients was 2,310 in week 7 (week beginning April 12), 46% lower than baseline.
- Declines were seen in all cancer types in week 7, ranging from 25% to 52% ($P<.05$).
- The mean age of patients with breast, colorectal, lung, and pancreatic cancers was lower during the pandemic period compared to baseline ($P<.05$).

Conclusions

- Fewer new cancer patients were identified during the COVID-19 pandemic period compared to normal baseline.
- Urgent actions will need to be taken to avoid a potential increase in cancer deaths in the United States due to delayed diagnoses.

References

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2. Garcia S, Albaghadi MS, Meraj PM, et al. Reduction in ST-segment elevation cardiac catheterization laboratory activations in the United States during COVID-19 pandemic. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. April 9, 2020. doi:[10.1016/j.jacc.2020.04.011](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jacc.2020.04.011)