
DISRUPTION OF THE CANCER CONTINUUM DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused unprecedented disruptions across the cancer continuum. The negative effects of some of these disruptions are immediately apparent, while others may take years to become clear:

Cancer Etiology

Involvement of some cancer-causing genes and proteins in SARS-CoV-2 infection has led to the hypothesis that long COVID—lingering symptoms of the disease in some patients months after exposure—may accelerate cancer onset and progression in COVID-19 patients with no history of cancer. Long-term and carefully designed studies are required to determine whether long COVID in fact impacts cancer development.



Cancer Prevention

The pandemic increased tobacco and alcohol use and decreased physical activity, all modifiable behaviors with key roles in cancer prevention.



Cancer Detection

The pandemic resulted in nearly 10 million missed cancer screenings from January 2020 to July 2020.



Cancer Diagnosis

The pandemic impaired referrals for preliminary cancer diagnoses and led to an 11 percent increase in patients diagnosed with inoperable or metastatic cancer during March-December 2020, when compared to the same time frame in 2019.



Cancer Treatment

The pandemic necessitated adaptations in anticancer treatment regimens, ranging from canceled surgeries and radiotherapy to modified schedules and/or dosing for patients receiving chemotherapy, molecularly targeted therapy, and/or immunotherapy.



Cancer Survivorship

The pandemic provided a new source of stress for cancer survivors, compounding the many mental health symptoms, such as anxiety and depression, already prevalent in this population.

