

Support from spouse beneficial for cancer patients

By ACSH Staff — September 30, 2013



^[1]According to a [new study](#) ^[2], published in *The Journal of Clinical*

Oncology, married cancer patients are less likely to die of the disease than single cancer patients. The study suggests the explanation is related to the support that one's spouse may provide.

Researchers analyzed the records of about 735,000 people diagnosed with cancer between 2004 and 2008 in the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program. The study was focused on the ten leading cancer killers: lung, colon, breast, pancreatic, prostate, liver, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, head and neck, ovarian and esophageal. They found that single patients were 53 percent less likely than married patients to receive appropriate treatments and 17 percent more likely than married patients to be diagnosed with late-stage cancer by the time they chose to see a doctor. The benefits of spousal support were greater in men than in women, suggesting that single women are better at reaching out to others for support than single men.

Dr. Ayal A. Aizer, chief resident of the Harvard Radiation Oncology Program and the study's first author says, When you have a spouse who is present when the patient is diagnosed, they are an invested party and they are going to more likely make sure the patient goes to the doctor, that they get the necessary treatments. We don't think there's something intrinsic about people who are married, but we do think it's the support marriage is providing that makes a difference.

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[2] http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/24/married-cancer-patients-live-longer/?_r=0