

# The Southampton Press

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## CANCER JOURNEYS

A Twice-a-month column from  
Fighting Chance

## COVID-19 + Cancer: New Issues Ahead



Diagnosis

Emotional Impact

Treatment/Side Effects

Survivorship

Patient Stories

### RECENT STATISTICS

At Fighting Chance one of our main jobs is to counsel cancer patients whose emotional well-being has been degraded by factors such as hyper-anxiety, paralyzing fear, and depression.

In recent months one of the questions posed most often by our patients is:

How dangerous is it for a cancer patient to become infected with COVID-19?

This question is answered by three recent studies that have compared the fatality rate of those with cancer + COVID versus the death rate for those who suffered from COVID alone. In summary, these are the results:\*

<u>PATIENTS IN STUDY</u>	<u>COVID ONLY</u>	<u>COVID+ CANCER</u>
2,000	4%	16%
800	4%	26%
200	4%	28%

\*2,000 patient study reflected data inputted from several US hospitals and published in *The Lancet* (May 2020); the 800 patient study analyzed data from patients mainly in Europe and also was published in *The Lancet*. The 200 patient study drew all of its participants from one US hospital and results were published in the May 2020 issue of *Cancer Discovery*.

### STUDY FROM ACS

During the past seven months, most US hospitals have prioritized treatment of COVID patients. Because of this form of triage, medical facilities sometimes postponed treatments for cancer patients.

So, about how many cancer patients had their treatment disrupted during the spring and summer months? The answer is about 50% according to yet another study (of 1,200 patients) recently publicized by the American Cancer Society.

The emotional toll this can have on patients is captured in the following quote from the *NY Times* article of 8/25/20.

*"Delaying treatment is especially disturbing to people with cancer ... it seems to contradict health messaging saying find the disease early and treat it as soon as possible"*

### RESUMING TREATMENT

If half of the nation's cancer patients in treatment had treatments postponed -- as the reprint from the ACS suggests -- then there is work to do to insure that these patients promptly resume treatment.

Resuming therapy may well involve scores of calls to patients by social workers, nurses, even oncologists emphasizing the importance of making the therapy interruptions as brief as possible.

Please feel free to call Fighting Chance if you are either a recently diagnosed cancer patient or are in treatment, and would like some support during these complicated times. If you know a cancer patient, who could use our services, please share our contact information.

Fighting Chance has offices in  
Sag Harbor and at the  
Phillips Family Cancer Center  
in Southampton.

For more details, or information  
please call 631 725 4646.

Visit our website at  
[www.fightingchance.org](http://www.fightingchance.org)

FIGHTING CHANCE: FREE CANCER COUNSELING & RESOURCE CENTER