

New Study Shows Children of Parents with Cancer History in US May be Vulnerable to Housing, Food and Financial Hardship

American Cancer Society researchers stress strategies to identify children with parental cancer history

ATLANTA, June 22, 2023 – A new study by researchers at the [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS) found children of parents with a cancer history in the United States are more at risk of having unmet needs for housing, food, and other living necessities than their counterparts without a parental cancer history. The findings will be published today in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open.

“Cancer is a life-threatening disease and parents with a history of cancer are often saddled with worry about paying for food, the rent or mortgage, and other monthly bills,” said [Dr. Zhiyuan “Jason” Zheng](#), senior principal scientist of health services research at the American Cancer Society and lead author of the study. “Our earlier research has shown us how a parent’s diagnosis of cancer can impact a child’s physical and mental health, but not much was known about the social and economic impact until now. We hope these findings will help shine a spotlight on this important issue.”

For this study, researchers used the 2013 to 2018 National Health Interview Survey to identify children aged 5 to 17 years old with and without a parental cancer history. This cross-sectional and nationally representative household survey is done each year and households provided this information about unmet economic needs among children in the U.S. A parental history of cancer was defined as any parent who had been diagnosed with cancer or a malignant neoplasm by a health care professional.

The results showed parental cancer history was associated with more severe family-level food insecurity (i.e., worry about food running out, purchased food not lasting before having money to buy more, and inability to afford balanced meals). Parental cancer history was also associated with worry by parents about paying monthly bills, housing-related costs, and delays in child medical care because of lack of transportation. Among children with a parental cancer history, girls, non-Hispanic Black children, those whose parents had multiple comorbidities, and children living in low-income families were especially vulnerable to unmet economic needs.

“Strategies are needed to identify children with a parental cancer history and to identify and address these critical unmet needs,” said Zheng. “Also, further study is needed to determine if these unmet economic and social needs among children last through adulthood.”

Other ACS authors participating in this study include [Dr. Xuesong Han](#), [Jingxuan Zhao](#), [Dr. Qinjin Fan](#), and [Dr. Robin Yabroff](#).

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About the American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society is a leading cancer-fighting organization with a vision to end cancer as we know it, for everyone. For more than 100 years, we have been improving the lives of people with cancer and their families as the only organization combating cancer through advocacy, research, and patient support. We are committed to ensuring everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer. To learn more, visit [cancer.org](#) or call our 24/7 helpline

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