

In the news

GOING UP

A recent report from researchers at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in the United States has shown that the costs of caring for cancer patients in the United States could increase by as much as 66% by 2020. The reasons for this increase were outlined by Dr Robin Yabroff of the NCI who was involved in the study, “We are expecting to see a lot more cancer in the future ... mostly in the elderly.” ([CNN Health](#), 12 Jan 2011).

Using data from the 2005 national database in the United States for 17 different cancer types, the study noted that there will be some 18.1 million cancer survivors in the United States by 2020, 4.3 million more than in 2010. This increase equates to US\$157.70 billion for cancer treatment and care in 2020, \$33.20 billion more than the projected estimate for last year. These cost predictions assume that there will be no change in the rates of cancer incidence, survival or treatment costs by 2020. If the costs of diagnostic tests and treatments rise by 2% per year, then the costs could be \$173 billion or \$207 billion if the current costs of treatment were to rise by 5% per year over the next 10 years.

Other researchers not involved in the study have voiced concerns that actual increases could in fact be higher than those outlined in this study, “Cancer incidence and survival rates have increased, as have costs of cancer services such as drugs, hospitalizations and home care”, said Dr Gary Lyman from the Duke Center for Health Policy Research in the United States. ([MedScape](#), 14 Jan 2011). However, the authors of the study hope that “Trends in costs associated with the use of targeted chemotherapies might be mitigated somewhat through the use of genomic-based prognostic markers,” whereas Gary Lyman sees early detection and prevention as the “only reasonable long-term solution.” ([MedScape](#), 14 Jan 2011).

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