

BREAKING NEWS

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BRUSSELS BUREAU

One million cancer cases undiagnosed in Europe due to pandemic, new study shows

COMMENTS

By Meabh McMahon • Updated: 12/05/2021



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Nearly one million cancer cases are being missed across Europe due to COVID-19, a new study has shown.

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According to data published by the European Cancer Organisation (E.C.O) diagnoses are going unchecked because of the pandemic and the restrictions imposed.

ECO President Dr Matti Aapro said that the findings bring the impact of COVID-19 on cancer into sharp focus.

"We desperately need urgent measures at the highest level of European policy to address the cancer backlog, restore confidence in cancer services and tackle workforce/supply shortages," Aapro said.

According to the study, up to 1 in 2 people with potential cancer symptoms were not urgently referred for diagnosis, and 1 in every 5 cancer patients in Europe is currently still not receiving the surgical or chemotherapy treatment they need.

Professor Mark Lawlor, a cancer researcher from Queen's University Belfast told Euronews that the research found millions of cancer screen tests have also been missed.

"We've also seen a significant loss of missing cancer screening tests. As many as 100 million have not been performed in Europe during the pandemic," Lawlor explained. "And what this can lead to is the actual stage of the diagnosis being delayed. And if the cancer is diagnosed at a later stage, then that means it's much more difficult to treat and there's much more of a risk of people dying from the disease. And we also found that one in five cancer patients in Europe are still not receiving the surgical or chemotherapy treatment that they need.

Clinical trials and cancer research also came to a halt due to COVID. Some fear 18 months of progress could be lost.

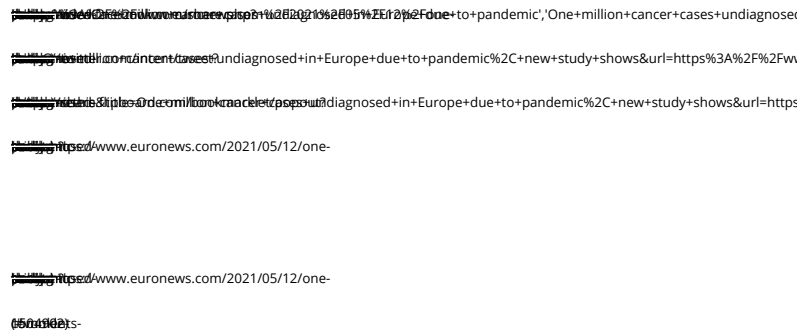
Véronique Trillet-Lenoir MEP says that it is time to put a real focus again on cancer patients and cancer research.

"Cancer patients had a double punishment during this pandemic," Trillet-Lenoir told Euronews. "Firstly, because they are, because of their disease and their treatment, particularly fragile and also because during the confinement they have effectively been deprived of a certain number of visits to the hospital that allow them diagnoses or treatments."

She added: "The EU will try to do better in the future to better protect patients of cancer and patients of chronic illness if a crisis like this arises again."

"We have to continue to evaluate the impact of COVID on these types of illnesses and we also need to continue what we are doing and to prioritise vaccines for patients of cancer who are particularly fragile."

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