

File under: Skin cancer

This study shows that technology has made it possible to detect abnormalities at a very early stage. So early that many of the found abnormalities would not develop into a threat. or as the author explains: "Over diagnosis is the term used when a condition is diagnosed that would otherwise not go on to cause symptoms or death".

Over diagnosis lead to too much therapy and should be avoided.

Overdiagnosis in Cancer

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This article summarizes the phenomenon of cancer over diagnosis—the diagnosis of a “cancer” that would otherwise not go on to cause symptoms or death.

We describe the two prerequisites for cancer over diagnosis to occur: the existence of a silent disease reservoir and activities leading to its detection (particularly cancer screening).

We estimated the magnitude of over diagnosis from randomized trials: about 25% of mammographically detected breast cancers, 50% of chest x-ray and/or sputum-detected lung cancers, and 60% of prostate-specific antigen–detected prostate cancers.

We also review data from observational studies and population-based cancer statistics suggesting over diagnosis in computed tomography–detected lung cancer, neuroblastoma, thyroid cancer, melanoma, and kidney cancer.

To address the problem, patients must be adequately informed of the nature and the magnitude of the trade-off involved with early cancer detection. Equally important, researchers need to work to develop better estimates of the magnitude of over diagnosis and develop clinical strategies to help minimize it. J Natl Cancer Inst 2010;102:1–9