

Internet Access Linked to Earlier Stage Non-Small-Cell Lung Cancer Diagnosis and Care

Broadband access is a social determinant of health, facilitating connections with healthcare services and other resources.

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A new nationwide study from researchers at the [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS) found that increased access to broadband usage is associated with earlier-stage non-small-cell lung cancer (NSCLC) diagnosis and receiving guideline-concordant care in 2020. Greater broadband access, combined with the expansion of telehealth services during the COVID-19 pandemic, may have improved telehealth utilization, leading to enhanced quality of cancer care, particularly benefiting individuals residing in non-metropolitan areas.

These findings [were] presented at the annual [American Society of Clinical Oncology \(ASCO\) Quality Care Symposium](#) in San Francisco, September 27-28, 2024.

In the study, researchers, led by Dr. [Qinjin Fan](#), senior scientist, health services research at the American Cancer Society, analyzed data from 305,198 individuals, 18 years old and older, newly diagnosed with first primary NSCLC between April and December of 2019-2021. Patients were identified from the National Cancer Database (January - March were excluded to match the COVID-19 pandemic timeframe in 2020). Broadband usage percentage (the percentage of individuals per zip code with access to fixed broadband at speeds of 25 Mbps download/3 Mbps upload in 2020) was combined with the cohort based on an individual's residential zip code.

The results showed individuals with the highest broadband usage quartile were more likely to be diagnosed with Stage I NSCLC and receipt of guidelines-concordant neoadjuvant chemoradiation compared with those living in areas with the lowest broadband usage quartile. When stratified by metropolitan status, associations of broadband and receipt of neoadjuvant chemoradiation were only observed among individuals living in non-metropolitan areas with medium-low and medium-high broadband usage. No significant associations were identified for other guideline-concordant care modalities during 2019 and 2021.

Researchers suggest access to broadband is a social determinant of health, facilitating

connections with healthcare services and other resources and alleviating burdens of travel distance, time, and cost.

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