Insight

Cancer Care in the United States Is Unrivaled

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Executive Summary

- In 2025, there is estimated to be more than 2 million new cases of cancer in the United States; the continued increase in cancer prevalence presents a complex care challenge for the health care industry.
- The United States consistently outpaces the rest of the world in concentration of cancer care specialists, institutions, access to therapies, and most important, outcomes.
- Leveraging these resources and capabilities, the United States has higher all-site five-year survival rates than comparable countries.

Introduction

Cancer is one of the most ubiquitous health challenges faced by people around the world. Cancer incidence rates are rising, with a projected 35.3 million cases worldwide by 2050. In 2025, the United States is projected to have more than 2 million new cases of cancer, and more than 600,000 people are estimated to die from the disease. With the increasing prevalence of all types of cancer, access to specialists and treatment is key to ensuring patients have the best possible survival rates and living in the United States makes the odds of this much higher than anywhere else in the world.

The United States Is Home to the Top Cancer Hospitals

The United States is home to a large share of the best cancer hospitals in the world, offering advanced treatments and pioneering research. Of the top five cancer hospitals in the world, the United States holds both the number one and two spots: University of Texas MD

Anderson Cancer Center in Houston was ranked the best oncology center this year while Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York City came in second. Among the world's top 20 cancer centers, the United States leads with seven institutions – more than any other country. In comparison, the entirety of the European Union (EU) has only four, the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada each have one, and the rest are scattered across the world.

While the U.S. government provides strong leadership in cancer research and treatments (National Cancer Act of 1971; Cancer Moonshot; establishment of ARPA-H; etc.), this is not the only force behind the United States' enormous advancements in cancer care. The private sector plays its own large role in the development of cancer treatments and innovative ways to connect patients to care. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) supports private facilities dedicated to cancer research and treatment. There are currently more than 70 NCI Designated Cancer Centers in 37 states and D.C. Additionally, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) – a private initiative comprised of 33 leading cancer centers across the country – collaborates to establish evidence-based guidelines that shape cancer care standards. As outlined in its work, NCCN institutions pioneered the concept of the multidisciplinary team approach to patient care, and conduct research that provides major contributions to understanding, diagnosing, and treating cancer. This extensive network ensures that patients nationwide have access to high-quality care and the latest advancements in oncology.

Innovation Leads to Live-saving Access to Therapeutics

The U.S. system of commercial payers, regulatory expertise, research resources, and drug manufacturers ensure that Americans get access to medicine significantly faster in comparison to our European and Canadian counterparts.

In 2024, the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Center for Drug Evaluation and Research approved 50 novel drugs, 15 of which were related to cancer care and treatment. Notably, four of these cancer therapies were for rare cancers or tumors. Patients in the United States are some of the first to receive these life-saving therapies.

Treatments are continuously being developed, with dramatic advancements made in various innovative treatment fields.

- **Immunotherapy Advancements**: Some new drugs have shown remarkable efficacy in treating various cancers in safer, less invasive methods such as an immune-based treatment that help a person's own immune systems shrink tumors, with some studies reporting complete remission in specific patient groups.

- **Targeted Therapies**: Various companies are developing treatments that target specific genetic mutations in cancers such as pancreatic cancer, offering hope where traditional therapies have limited success.

- **Personalized Cancer Vaccines**: Researchers at Yale Cancer Center are inventing vaccines tailored to individual tumor profiles, with early trials indicating prolonged remission in kidney cancer patients.

Among the 129 cancer drugs approved in both the United States and EU from 2005–2022, approval occurred an average of nine and a half months earlier in the United States. Additionally, across all Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development countries, the United States is the clear leader in launching novel cancer therapies. According to a 2022 IQVIA study, of the new oncology drugs launched between 2016–2020, 96 percent were available in the United States within six months of FDA approval. In Canada, only 56 percent of those same drugs were available within the same period, and only 48–50 percent of new oncology drugs became available within one to two years after European Medicines Agency approval.

Access to Cancer Care Specialists

The United States boasts a substantial workforce of cancer care specialists, ensuring patients receive expert care throughout their treatment journey. According to recent data, there are more than 46,000 cancer specialists, including medical, radiation, and surgical oncologists, practicing across the country. This extensive network facilitates timely consultations, second opinions, and multidisciplinary approaches to cancer treatment. Comparatively, in 2023, the Royal College of Radiologists reported only 1,023 oncologists in the UK, warning that such a workforce shortage would not allow the country to "deliver the required level of care."

A 2019 observational study showed that the median time from cancer diagnosis to treatment in the United States was 27 days. In the UK, the target time for cancer diagnosis to treatment is more than double, at 62 days, and even this target has been regularly missed since December 2015. Shorter wait times in the United States have attracted Canadian patients, with over 600 cancer patients in British Columbia traveling south to receive treatment. This shows that access to cancer specialists has a marked impact on the diagnosis-to-treatment pathway.

Moreover, initiatives such as AccessHope connect patients and local oncologists with experts from National Cancer Institute-designated centers, ensuring that even those in remote areas benefit from specialized insights and recommendations. Such collaborations

enhance the access to care necessary for quality cancer care and ensure that advancements in treatment are accessible nationwide.

Access to Top Cancer Hospitals, Specialists, and Therapeutics Increases Survival in the United States

When you get very sick, you want to be treated in the United States. The U.S. health care system incentivizes speedier access to innovative cancer treatments that are second to none. If you are battling cancer – especially if it's a rare or difficult kind – you want to be in the United States, where patients have access to the most robust combination of specialty hospitals, cutting-edge therapies and oncology specialists. Since 1991, the U.S. cancer death rate has declined by 33 percent, largely thanks to new therapies, better diagnostic technology, and access to the best cancer specialists. The United States boasts a nearly 70 percent all-cancer five-year survival rate. In comparison, countries with single-payer health care systems tend to have lower survival rates. For instance, the five-year survival rate is 55 percent in the UK and 57 percent in Spain.

Common Cancer Survival Rates

Cancer Type	United States	Canada	United Kingdom
Breast	90.2%	87%	85.6%
Colorectal	64.5%	66%	59.1%
Lung	~21%	~18%	~14%
Prostate	97.2%	91.4%	87.2%
Stomach	~32%	~28%	20%

The strength of the U.S. health care system in combating cancer is evident through its unparalleled access to leading institutions, continuous innovation in treatment modalities, and a vast network of specialized professionals. Collectively, these facets of the U.S. health care system contribute to improved survival rates and quality of life for cancer patients.