What Are My Survival Chances? A Cancer Calculator Does the Math

Yet some doctors say even a well-refined internet tool should not replace people's conversations with oncologists.

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The new website CancerSurvivalRates.com has launched with the promise of providing people with cancer and their families a simple way of getting information about the typical survival rates for their type of cancer, STAT reports.

While the site is meant to inspire further dialogue with cancer physicians, some experts are concerned that online access to such cancer prognosis information could instead supplant such a conversation while overlooking critical nuances about an individual's survival chances.

Working with oncologists, the entrepreneurs behind the drug-pricing information site GoodRx created the new site with the goal of helping people assimilate what normally would be a disparate, highly technical and hard-to-understand amount of information about cancer survival rates.

The site asks about an individual's age and sex and for details about their cancer diagnosis, including the cancer's stage and grade, time since diagnosis and particular details about the tumors. The resulting prognoses, based on data from the National Cancer Institute, are expressed in the number of people out of 10 who will survive for up to five years.

One expert who spoke to STAT expressed reservations about people with cancer exploring their prognosis online because tools such as CancerSurvivalRates.com's can leave out important nuances relating to a specific individual's health. Countering this, a radiation oncologist who advised the site's creators says the tool is meant as a springboard for clinician-patient conversation.

Furthermore, many physicians are underprepared to discuss cancer survival rates with their patients. A 2016 study found that only 3 out of 10 doctors had been trained to discuss end-of-life care with patients covered by Medicare.

To read the STAT article, click here.

To use the survival rates tool, click here.

To learn more about survival rate trends, click here.

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