

Shaping EU's Beating Cancer Plan Understanding interactions between cancer and cardiovascular disease

On the occasion of World Cancer Day, the European Society of Cardiology welcomes the launch of the public discussion on *Europe's Beating Cancer Plan* in the European Parliament.



Source: Larsen CM, et al. 2018 ACC Annual Scientific Session, Session #1109-066
cancer.gov

The Plan is an outstanding opportunity for the EU to showcase the added value it brings in improving health of European citizens. However, to successfully achieve the goal of reducing the burden of Europe's second killer disease, a more integrated and holistic approach on co-morbidities is needed.

Recent studies have shown that advances in treatment have led to improved survival of cancer patients but have also increased mortality due to treatment side effects¹. **Cardiovascular diseases (Heart Failure, Myocardial Infarction, Arrhythmias) are one of the most frequent side effects, and there is a growing concern that they may lead to premature morbidity and death among cancer survivors².**

This is the result of cardiotoxicity, which involves direct effects of cancer treatment on the heart function. Cardiovascular disease is the major cause of mortality in elderly women diagnosed with breast cancer. Furthermore, researchers have found that within five years of their cancer diagnosis, the risk of heart failure was three times higher in people treated for breast cancer or lymphoma than in people without cancer.

Heart failure is the final stage of most cardiovascular diseases. It is extremely debilitating and deadly, as no effective treatment, except heart transplantation, is currently available to cure it. The interaction between cancer and chronic heart failure is a massive psychological burden for patients and has significant economic impact on EU's healthcare systems. Equally, an increasing incidence of cancer in patients with heart disease has been identified, clearly showing the need to avoid tackling diseases in a silos approach.

For these reasons, the European Society of Cardiology calls on the European Commission and the European Parliament to:

- **Recognise cancer – comorbidities as central component of the EU Cancer Plan** and cardiovascular disease as the most frequent co-morbidity
- **Involve the cardiovascular community in dialogue** for the preparation of the EU Cancer Plan
- **Support research on cancer and cardiovascular comorbidities under the EU Cancer Mission**

¹ <https://academic.oup.com/eurheartj/article/37/36/2768/2197413>

² <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/ejhf.1165>