

Is late-stage cancer incurable? Drug developments turns some cancers from a death-sentence into a manageable chronic disease

Thanks to a combination of forces, cancer drug development is now happening fast enough that... it is outpacing the growth of cancer cells inside their bodies. For these patients, cancer is more like a chronic disease than a one-time catastrophic event.

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Every time a new cancer treatment approach emerges, oncologists and overexcited journalists have a habit of declaring that a cure for cancer is imminent. What's happening now is different. Rather than a single breakthrough therapy or discovery, a variety of scientific advances are exerting downward pressure on cancer mortality in new ways and at the same time. As a result, the landscape for many cancer patients has changed tremendously in just the past five years. The Cancer Moonshot, a multibillion-dollar initiative championed by President Biden, aims to cut the cancer death rate by 50 percent in the next quarter century. The goal is lofty, but recent progress against cancer means it's now less far-fetched than it might have once seemed.

"The pace of progress is most certainly accelerating," said Dr. Jedd Wolchok, an oncologist and director of the Sandra and Edward Meyer Cancer Center at Weill Cornell Medicine. "There are so many things converging."

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