

# Older adults increasingly have HPV+ oropharyngeal cancers

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(HealthDay)—Human papillomavirus (HPV)-positive oropharyngeal

cancers are increasing among older adults, according to a study published online April 30 in *Cancer*.

Melina J. Windon, M.D., from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and colleagues retrospectively studied 239 cases of oropharyngeal squamous cell carcinoma (OPSCC) diagnosed at two National Comprehensive Cancer Network-designated [cancer](#) centers (1995 to 2013). P16 immunohistochemistry and in situ hybridization (ISH) for HPV-16, high-risk DNA, and/or E6/E7 RNA were performed. Age at diagnosis was compared by p16 and ISH tumor status.

The researchers found that 60 percent of patients were p16-positive. Over the study period the median age increased among p16-positive patients (P trend = 0.01) from 53 to 58 years, but not among p16-negative patients (P trend = 0.71). The proportion of OPSCCs that were p16-positive increased among [patients](#) ≥65 years old, from 41 percent during 1995 to 2000 to 75 percent during 2007 to 2013 (P trend = 0.04). Regardless of age, a p16-positive tumor status improved overall survival.

"The [median age](#) at diagnosis for HPV-related OPSCC is increasing as the proportion of OPSCCs caused by HPV rises among [older adults](#)," the authors write.

One author is on the scientific advisory boards of Medtronic and Olympus and is a consultant for Ziteo.

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