Younger cancer patients experience greater increase in religiosity

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People diagnosed with cancer at younger ages are more likely to become more religious than their counterparts diagnosed at older ages, researchers including a Princeton research scholar have found.

Overall, the researchers found that people diagnosed with cancer experienced a one-time increase in religiosity, with the greater increase among those who experienced a diagnosis at a younger age, what's known as an "off-time diagnosis."

"Off-time diagnoses may also be related to increased religiosity because the meaning of having cancer may be different for those in middle adulthood compared to older adulthood," the researchers said. The results come from a review of surveys of more than 3,400 people conducted in 1994–95 and 2004-06.

The research, detailed in an article in the March issue of *Social Science Research*, was conducted by Michael McFarland, a postdoctoral researcher at Princeton's Office of Population Research, Tetyana Pudrovska, an assistant professor at Pennsylvania State University; Scott Schieman, a professor at the University of Toronto; Christopher Ellison, a professor at the the University of Texas at San Antonio; and Alex Bierman, an assistant professor at the University of Calgary.

More information: McFarland, M., et al. March 2013. Does a cancer diagnosis influence religiosity? Integrating a life course perspective. *Social Science Research.* Vol. 42, Issue 2, pp. 311–20.

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