



UROLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF AUSTRALIA
AND NEW ZEALAND

Media Release

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Bladder cancer survival rates haven't improved as doctors call for faster access to better treatments

Bladder cancer survival has not changed significantly with survival rates in Australia still similar to that of thirty years ago, despite recent improvements in treatment. The cancer can be very aggressive, especially when it grows in the muscle of the bladder.

Chemotherapy given before surgery and newer immunotherapy drugs are steps that can increase survival rates, and experts from the [Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand](#) (USANZ) want urologists, medical oncologists and other doctors to make sure each patient is being given faster access to optimal treatments at the right time.

USANZ experts also want more attention paid to emerging therapies, such as access to newer immunotherapy trials which have shown to nearly double the 2-year-event-free survival rate in patients.

"Patients need to be given the best treatment options available to significantly augment outcomes of surgery and prolong survival, and any drug treatments that can achieve that should be available and actively explored," said Associate Professor Weranja Ranasinghe, the USANZ Genitourinary Oncology SAG Leader.

"Trials overseas have demonstrated better outcomes for bladder cancer patients, and we want to be able to offer those same outcomes to Australians as soon as possible," he said.

Bladder cancer is the eleventh most commonly diagnosed cancer in Australia, with more than 3,300 new cases recorded in 2025, up from approximately 3,000 in 2021. Men are three times more likely to be diagnosed than women, and every Australian faces a one in 100 risk of receiving a bladder cancer diagnosis by the age of 85.

Despite advances in cancer treatment more broadly, over the last 30 years, survival rates for bladder cancer patients have not improved.

Early detection remains the single best thing for patients, as bladder cancer is highly treatable when caught early.

Symptoms to be aware of include:

- Blood in the urine, or a sudden change in urine colour from slightly rusty to bright red.
- A sudden urge to urinate or passing urine more frequently than usual
- Pain or a burning feeling during urination
- Pain in the pelvis, lower abdomen or lower back
- And, unexplained loss of appetite or weight loss.
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Common risk factors for bladder cancer include:

- Smoking
- Older age
- Exposure to certain industrial chemicals
- A family history of bladder cancer
- And, a history of chronic urinary tract infections.

"Too many Australians are dismissing blood in their urine as something minor," said Assoc Prof Ranasinghe.

"The single most powerful thing everyone can do right now is to act early when symptoms appear," he said.

May is Bladder Cancer Awareness Month, and USANZ is urging everyone to get to know and understand the symptoms, their risk factors, and speak with their local doctor if they have any concerns.

About Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand is the peak professional body for urological surgeons in Australia and New Zealand. Urologists are surgeons who treat men, women and children with problems involving the kidney, bladder, prostate and male reproductive organs. These conditions include cancer, stones, infection, incontinence, urination difficulties, sexual dysfunction and pelvic floor problems. <https://www.usanz.org.au/>