

An FDA-backed metric used to determine effectiveness of rectal cancer drugs may be unreliable, says new study

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The absence of detectable tumors after treatment — a key metric in clinical cancer drug trials known as pathologic complete response or pCR — does not reliably predict an improvement in long-term survival for patients diagnosed with rectal cancer, a new study found. (Photo by iStock)

A new study by a Tulane University researcher casts doubt on a widely used shortcut in rectal cancer drug trials, raising concerns that some treatments may be fast-tracked for approval without evidence they help patients live longer. The researchers conducted a meta-analysis of 25 clinical trials involving nearly 12,000

rectal cancer patients. They found no statistical relationship between pCR and overall survival, meaning cancer drugs may be moving toward development without showing meaningful long-term improvements over existing treatments, said first author Kavin Sugumar, chief resident of general surgery at Tulane University School of Medicine. [Read the full story here.](#)