

# WHAT IS A RARE CANCER?

Rare cancers are types of  
cancers that affect  
**<20,000**  
people per year<sup>1</sup>

**1 in 4**  
cancers is  
considered rare<sup>2</sup>

There are  
**200+**  
types of  
rare cancer<sup>1</sup>

## But numbers don't tell the whole story.

Rare cancers can also be defined by the challenges that are consistent among them.



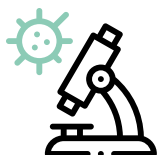
### Diagnosis can take a long time

- Rare cancers can be misdiagnosed or mistaken for other cancers.
- Symptoms may be unfamiliar or unusual.
- Doctors may not have experience with your particular tumor type.
- Extensive testing may be needed.



### Treatment options are limited, with more effective therapies urgently needed

- Lack of research data, financial viability, and small patient populations make developing treatments for rare cancers challenging.
- As a result, many people with rare cancers are treated with therapies or interventions intended for other cancers.
- Clinical trials can often offer the most effective treatment options, but are often lacking in rare cancers.



### Lack of research tools slows progress

- Lack of funding hinders researchers' ability to create dedicated research programs and develop the basic tools and data needed to make progress.
- As a result of smaller patient populations, there is less data to be studied.

<sup>1</sup> National Cancer Institute. [Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results Program](#). November 2020.

<sup>2</sup> [About Rare Cancers](#). National Cancer Institute. February 2019.

## Rare cancer patients and researchers need our help

Though tumor location, progression, and symptoms vary widely, there are many common challenges shared across the rare cancer community.



### Researcher Challenges

- Bleak research funding landscape and lack of attention from major funding sources
- Challenge in recruiting young investigators
- Lack of publicly available research models, such as cell lines and mouse models
- Small and disconnected tissue sample repositories
- Difficulty in clinical trial recruitment due to small patient populations



### Patient Challenges

- Delayed and/or incorrect diagnosis
- Often no established standard of care leading to treatments adapted from other cancers
- Lack of specific expertise by physicians
- Limited clinical trial options
- Inconsistent awareness of, and access to, biomarker testing
- Feeling of isolation and lack of community

**Since 2009, TargetCancer Foundation has been systematically working with partners across the rare cancer community to address these challenges.**



**targetcancer.org**

✉ info@targetcancer.org

☎ (617) 765-4881

