

Catherine O'Hara & The National Blood Clot Alliance: A Legacy of Laughter and a Vital Lesson About Blood Clots

Her passing underscores the urgent, preventable risk of cancer-associated blood clots — the second leading cause of death in people with cancer.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [The National Blood Clot Alliance](#) (NBCA) is urging patients and clinicians to recognize the life-threatening connection between cancer and blood clots following confirmation that beloved actress [Catherine O'Hara died from a pulmonary embolism](#) related to rectal cancer.

While O'Hara's decades-long career brought joy to millions, her sudden passing highlights a critical and often underrecognized medical reality: blood clots are the second leading cause of death in people with cancer, surpassed only by the cancer itself.



Dr. Rushad Patell,
hematologist at Beth
Israel Deaconess
Medical Center

"Blood clots are one of the most serious and preventable complications of cancer," said Dr. Rushad Patell, hematologist at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Co-Chair of the NBCA Council of Emerging Researchers in Thrombosis. "Too often, patients are never told about this risk, and symptoms are mistaken for side effects of treatment. Awareness and early action can save lives."

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A Hidden but Common Risk:

Up to 1 in 5 people with cancer will develop a blood clot during their journey.

Cancer increases clot risk in multiple ways:

- Cancer cells can release substances that make blood

more prone to clotting.

- Chemotherapy, surgery, and central lines further elevate risk.
- Symptoms such as shortness of breath, fatigue, or leg pain are often attributed to treatment — delaying diagnosis of a potentially fatal pulmonary embolism.

Despite clear evidence that many cancer-associated blood clots are preventable through risk assessment and appropriate thromboprophylaxis, prevention strategies remain underutilized.

A Broader Public Health Crisis:

Each year in the United States:

- Approximately 100,000 people die from pulmonary embolism
- An estimated 900,000 Americans develop a blood clot

Although cancer significantly increases risk, blood clots can affect anyone — regardless of age, fitness level, or health history — particularly during hospitalization, after surgery, with prolonged immobility, during pregnancy, or in the presence of certain medical conditions.

Recent research conducted in partnership with NBCA found that many patients with cancer remain unaware of their increased risk for blood clots, and most have never discussed prevention with their clinician, despite being open to doing so.

Know the Warning Signs:

Symptoms of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) may include swelling, pain, warmth, or redness in one limb.

Pulmonary embolism (PE) symptoms can include sudden shortness of breath, chest pain that worsens with breathing, coughing (sometimes with blood), lightheadedness, or a rapid heart rate.

NBCA encourages patients and caregivers to:

- Ask about their personal risk
- Discuss prevention strategies
- Seek immediate medical care if symptoms develop

“With March recognized as Blood Clot Awareness Month, this is an important moment to start conversations that can prevent unnecessary loss,” said Dr. Patell. “No family should be blindsided by a complication that is often preventable.”

Resources are available at [StopTheClot.org](https://www.stoptheclot.org).

About the National Blood Clot Alliance:

The National Blood Clot Alliance (NBCA) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment of life-threatening blood clots. Through education, advocacy, and research, NBCA works to empower patients, support healthcare providers, and drive meaningful improvements in VTE care nationwide.

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