

Reliance on God linked to reliance on treatment

Adelle M. Banks Religion News Service | May. 3, 2011

WASHINGTON -- Cancer patients who consider the length of their lives to be 'in God's hands' are more willing than others to spend money on treatments that might extend their lives, a new study shows.

Michelle Martin, an assistant professor at the University of Alabama, based her research on findings of a National Cancer Institute study of 4,214 patients with colorectal and lung cancer.

The study, reported in a recent issue of the journal *Cancer*, also found African-Americans were more willing to spend all their resources to extend their life than members of other racial and ethnic groups.

Martin hopes to conduct a more in-depth study, but speculates some patients may feel God is encouraging them to continue treatment.

'If you see the physicians as tools of God, you might think ... if God has put these individuals in my life to help me then I should avail myself of that opportunity,' she said.

But others may think 'if you're really religious, this life is a temporary one and you may be motivated by the life hereafter.'

With some patients more interested in the here and now and others in the hereafter, she said it's hard to predict medical preferences without asking.

'The overall message of the study in general is that you can't make assumptions,' she said.

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