



UNDER EMBARGO—until 1.00AM, Thursday 21 March, 2019

Cases of cancer triple since early 1980s, but survival rates are improving

Survival rates for most types of cancer are improving, according to a report released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The report, *Cancer in Australia 2019*, shows the number of new cases of cancer diagnosed in 2019 is expected to be three times that of 1982—rising from 47,500 to 145,000.

‘This increasing trend is primarily due to rises in the number of cases of prostate cancer, breast cancer, bowel cancer and melanoma, and is partly explained by the ageing, and increasing size, of the population,’ said AIHW spokesperson Mr Justin Harvey.

However, while the number of cancer cases is up, the report shows that five-year survival rates from all cancers combined had improved from 50% in 1986–1990 to 69% in 2011–2015.

‘Changes in survival rates over time varied by cancer type, with the largest survival improvements seen in prostate cancer, kidney cancer, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, and multiple myeloma,’ Mr Harvey said.

Over the same period (1986–1990 to 2011–2015), survival rates for patients with cancer of the larynx, lip cancer, mesothelioma, brain cancer and cancer of other digestive organs showed no significant change. The report also found that survival rates for those suffering from bladder cancer had decreased.

For the first time, national data are available on the stage at which cancer was diagnosed for the five most common cancers in 2011 (prostate, breast, bowel and lung cancer and melanoma). This work was possible through collaboration between the AIHW, all state and territory population-based cancer registries and Cancer Australia.

Analysis of this new data found that five-year survival rates were higher for cancers diagnosed at earlier stages (stages I and II). Bowel cancers, breast cancers, melanomas, and prostate cancers diagnosed in 2011 all had close to 100% 5-year relative survival when diagnosed at Stage I.

At Stage IV, these survival rates were 36% for prostate cancer, 32% for breast cancer, 26% for melanoma and 13% for bowel cancer. While lung cancer had comparatively low 5-year survival at Stage I (68%), it was significantly higher than the 3% 5-year relative survival rate for lung cancer diagnosed at Stage IV.

While survival rates continue to improve, the report shows that cancer remains a major cause of death in Australia.

‘In fact, when we consider all types of cancer together, we see that they are responsible for more deaths than any other group of diseases, accounting for 3 in every 10 deaths in 2016,’ Mr Harvey said

Lung cancer is expected to be the leading cause of cancer death in 2019, followed by colorectal cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer and pancreatic cancer.

‘These five cancers are expected to account for around half—or 48%—of all deaths from cancer in 2019, with lung cancer alone expected to account for nearly 1 in 5—or 18% of— cancer deaths,’ Mr Harvey said.

‘More males than females are expected to die from cancer in 2019, with 56% of cancer-related deaths expected to occur in males.’

The report also looked at how cancer outcomes differ across population groups.





For all cancers combined, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experienced lower five-year survival rates than non-Indigenous Australians.

A similar pattern was seen for people living in very remote areas, with lower five-year survival rates and higher death rates recorded in these areas.

Mr Harvey noted that while death and survival rates varied among different groups, people diagnosed with cancer in Australia generally have positive outcomes when considered in an international context.

'The data suggest Australia has among the world's best cancer survival rates, with a relatively low ratio of deaths to the number of cases diagnosed in the Australia/New Zealand region,' he said.

North America and most areas of Europe also recorded positive results above the global average.

Canberra, 19 March 2019

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