



## Cancer survival shows significant improvement

Survival after cancer is improving significantly in Australia, although not for all types of cancer. Survival is also better among the more advantaged groups in the population. These findings are presented in a report released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), together with Cancer Australia and the Australasian Association of Cancer Registries.

The report, *Cancer survival and prevalence in Australia*, shows that in the period between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s, the relative chances of surviving 5 years after a diagnosis of cancer increased significantly. The increase in survival was generally greater for men than for women, with all-cancer five-year relative survival for men increasing from 41% in the period 1982–1986 to 58% for those diagnosed in 1998–2004. Women maintained a higher survival overall, although with a smaller relative increase over the same period - from 53% to 64%.

‘The greatest increases in survival were seen in the 50 to 69 year age range. This was due, at least in part, to screening programs,’ said Dr Mark Short of the AIHW’s Health Registers and Cancer Monitoring Unit.

Not all cancers showed the same improvement over the period. The best improvements were seen in prostate cancer, kidney cancer, breast cancer and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Brain cancer showed no significant change in survival and bladder cancer survival appeared to decrease.

The cancers with the highest five-year survival in the 1998–2004 period were testicular cancer (97%), thyroid cancer (93%), melanoma (92%), breast cancer (88%) and prostate cancer (85%).

Cancers with the lowest relative survival were pancreatic cancer, lung cancer, brain cancer, stomach cancer and cancer of unknown primary site.

For childhood cancers there was a large increase in 5-year survival for leukaemia, from 64% in 1982–1986 to 83% in 1998–2004. But there was little change for the next most common cancers in children – cancers of the brain, bone and connective tissue.

Like many other health indicators, cancer survival is not as good among people living in low socioeconomic status areas and in rural and remote Australia. All-cancer five-year relative survival for both men and women was lower for those in low versus high socioeconomic status areas (54% compared to 65% for men and 61% compared to 68% for women). The greatest difference was apparent in non-Hodgkin lymphoma and cervical cancer.

Professor David Currow, Chief Executive Officer of Cancer Australia, said the report’s findings would assist in developing future cancer control activities.

*Canberra, 30 August 2008*

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