



MEDIA RELEASE

Breast cancer survival improving, but 37 women still diagnosed each day

Survival rates for breast cancer nationally are improving, however, 37 Australian women are diagnosed with breast cancer each day, according to a report released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and Cancer Australia.

The report, *Breast cancer in Australia: an overview*, shows the number of new breast cancer cases more than doubled from around 5,300 to 13,600 cases between 1982 and 2008.

'There was a sharp increase in the incidence rate of breast cancer between 1990 and 1995, after which the rate has been stable', said AIHW spokesperson Anne Bech.

'The sharp increase in the incidence rate in the early 1990's was most likely due to the introduction of the national breast cancer screening program in 1991.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Australian women and the majority of cases (69%) are diagnosed in women aged 40-69.

'The number of women diagnosed with breast cancer is expected to rise in the future due to the ageing population. Our projections indicate that in 2020 about 17,200 new breast cancers will be diagnosed in Australia. This would equate to 47 women being diagnosed every day,' Ms Bech said.

'Importantly, the report also shows that survival from breast cancer continues to improve in Australia, with these improvements due to both earlier diagnosis and better treatments,' Cancer Australia CEO Dr Helen Zorbas said.

Between the periods 1982-1987 and 2006-2010, 5-year relative survival from breast cancer increased from 72% to 89%.

'The report also shows that women diagnosed with breast cancer in Australia have better survival prospects compared with women in most other countries and regions,' Dr Zorbas said.

'However, of concern, is that some population groups in Australia have lower survival than others, such as women living in *Remote and very remote* areas of Australia, those living in lower socio-economic areas and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.'

Around 2,700 women died from breast cancer in 2007 making it the second most common cause of cancer-related death for Australian women.

'Although survival rates are improving, the impact on the lives of Australian women is high with 7 women still dying each day from breast cancer,' Dr Zorbas said.

The AIHW is a major national agency set up by the Australian Government to provide reliable, regular and relevant information and statistics on Australia's health and welfare.

Cancer Australia provides national leadership in cancer control to improve outcomes for those affected by cancer, their families and carers.

9 October 2012

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For media copies of the report: Publications Officer 02 6244 1032 or email pubs@aihw.gov.au