The Epidemiology of Cancer in Florida
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Numbers and Trends

Based on information from the state tumor registry, the Florida Cancer Data System, approximately 99,100 new cases of cancer will have been diagnosed in Florida in 1997, or approximately one new case diagnosed every five minutes. Although this makes Florida the state with the third highest number of cases in the nation, the state actually has the highest crude incidence rate in the nation. In Florida, 40,100 deaths from cancer are expected this year, which is second only to the deaths experienced in California. The age-adjusted incidence rates of cancer of all sites combined rose from 1985 to 1991, but then began to fall (Figure). This is consistent with data from other states.

Cancer by Race and Site

For all sites combined, cancer incidence rates are highest in non-white men, followed by white men, white women, and non-white women. However, where mortality is concerned, rates among women are higher among non-whites than among whites. Mortality rates have remained relatively stable over the last 10 years.

Among men, prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed site, accounting for approximately one third of all cases, followed by lung cancer (approximately 20%), and colorectal cancers (approximately 12%). Among white men, bladder cancer is next most common (6%), followed by non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (4%). Among non-white men, cancers of the oral cavity and pharynx are the fourth most common sites (4%), followed by non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (4%).

For Florida women, breast cancer is the most common site (30% of all diagnoses). For white women, the next most common sites are the lung (15%), colorectum (14%), endometrium (5%), and ovary (4%). For non-white women, colorectal cancers are the second most commonly diagnosed site (13%), followed by lung (10%), cervix (6%), and endometrium (6%).

Cancer Mortality

Cancer mortality shows a different pattern, by both race and site. Among men, lung cancer and prostate cancer are the two most common sites (34% among whites and 32% among non-whites for lung cancer; 12% among whites and 18% among non-whites for prostate cancer), followed by deaths from colorectal cancer (10% and 8%, respectively). However, for white men, cancers of the pancreas (5%) and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (4%) are the fourth and fifth most common sites of deaths, while among non-whites, esophageal cancers (4%) and stomach cancers (4%) are the fourth and fifth most common causes of cancer related deaths. Among women, breast cancer accounts for 27% and 20% of all cancer deaths among whites and non-whites, respectively. Among white women, breast cancer is followed by cancer of the lung (16%), colorectum (11%), pancreas (6%), and ovary (5%). Among non-whites, the next most common sites after breast cancer are colorectal neoplasms (16%), lung (12%), pancreas (5%), and stomach (4%).

Race and Gender Comparisons

When the incidence of major cancers occurring among Florida non-whites and whites are compared, considerable differences are noted. For example, non-white men have a 60% higher incidence of prostate cancer than white men, and the mortality rate is 2.7 times higher. Among women, breast cancer incidence is 30% higher in whites, while the mortality rates for non-whites are actually lower. White women have a 10% higher incidence rate of ovarian cancer and a 30% higher mortality rate. For cancer of the endometrium, white women have a 10% increased incidence rate, but only 40% of the mortality rate is experienced by Florida non-white women. In contrast, non-white women have a 60% higher cervical cancer rate than white women but a mortality rate that is more than two times higher than non-whites.

For lung cancer, non-white Floridian men have a 10% higher incidence rate and a 30% higher mortality rate. However, Florida non-white women have only 60% of the incidence and mortality rate of Florida white women. Non-white men have a 20% higher incidence rate and an 80% higher mortality of oral cancer than white men. Among women, non-whites have a 20% higher incidence rate of oral cancer and a 70% higher mortality rate than among whites. Finally, among men, colorectal cancer incidence and mortality rates are very similar among whites and non-whites, while among women, whites have a 10% higher incidence and a 40% higher mortality rate than non-white women.

Cancer Among Hispanics
Rates of cancer for most sites are lower for Hispanics who may be of any race than for non-Hispanics. Notable exceptions to this are cancers of the liver and gallbladder and, in some age groups, cancers of the uterine cervix. Among Hispanic men, prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed site (31%), followed by lung (15%), colorectum (13%), bladder (5%), and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. The most common causes of cancer deaths among Hispanic men are lung (27%), prostate (14%), colorectum (11%), non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (6%), and pancreas (5%).

Among Hispanic women, breast cancer accounts for nearly one of every three cases (29%), followed by colorectal cancers (15%), lung (8%), endometrium (6%), and ovary. Breast cancer accounts for one of every five cancer deaths among Hispanic women, followed by colorectal cancer (13%), lung (11%), pancreas (7%), and non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma.

**Variation Within Florida**

There is considerable variation in rates of cancer throughout the state. While these differences are at least partly a function of demographic differences, they also suggest etiologic exposures. In general, lung cancer rates are highest in the northern part of Florida, particularly along the northeastern Gulf coast. Colorectal cancer rates for both incidence and mortality are highest in the northern Atlantic coastal counties. The highest incidence rates of breast cancer are observed in the northeastern counties and in the north central part of the state. However, there is greater variation in the mortality rates. Prostate cancer rates are highest along the central Atlantic coast of the state, although mortality rates are highest in the central Panhandle counties.

**Selected References**


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