

IARC launches the definitive cancer statistics resource GLOBOCAN 2008

A landmark resolution of the UN General Assembly¹ adopted in New York earlier this month called for action to address the increasing trends in premature deaths from non-communicable diseases worldwide, with a particular focus on developing countries. The International Agency for Research on Cancer² today announces GLOBOCAN 2008, which provides the most accurate assessment of the global cancer burden and shows that in 2008 a majority of the 12.7 million new cases of cancer and the 7.6 million cancer deaths worldwide occurred in developing countries.

An updated cancer statistics resource

The International Agency for Research on Cancer today 1 June 2010 announces the release of GLOBOCAN 2008,³ an online resource for cancer researchers, policy-makers and the media alike, which provides worldwide estimates⁴ of the numbers of new cases of, and deaths from, cancer for 2008.⁵ Information is provided for the overall burden of cancer and for 27 specific cancer types for almost all countries or territories of the world. According to GLOBOCAN, an estimated 12.7 million new cancer cases and 7.6 million cancer deaths occurred in 2008. Dr Christopher Wild, IARC Director, stated: "These figures represent the most accurate assessment of the global cancer burden available at present and can be used in the setting of priorities for cancer control in different regions of the world; they form a vital foundation to future responses to the UN resolution on non-communicable diseases."

Less-developed regions face a heavier cancer burden

GLOBOCAN 2008 demonstrates that a higher proportion of the cancer burden occurs in less developed regions of the world, both in terms of cancer incidence (56% of new cancer cases in 2008 occur within developing regions) and cancer mortality (63% of cancer deaths). The most commonly diagnosed cancers worldwide are lung (1.61 million, 12.7% of the total), breast (1.38 million, 10.9%) and colorectal cancers (1.23 million, 9.7%). The most common causes of cancer death are lung (1.38 million, 18.2% of the total), stomach (0.74 million, 9.7%) and liver cancers (0.69 million, 9.2%). Cancer is neither rare anywhere in the world, nor confined to high-resource countries. "Striking differences in the patterns of cancer from region to region are observed," Dr Wild added. "Cervix and liver cancers are much more common in developing regions of the world, whereas prostate and colorectal cancers are more common in developed regions."

Interactive and user-friendly tool: fact sheets and trend calculation online

The online resource is easy to use and has facilities to produce maps and other graphics. In addition, a series of fact sheets describe the overall cancer burden within specific areas or countries, as well as the major global patterns for eight common cancers.

¹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2F64%2FL.52&Submit=Search&Lang=E

² IARC is the specialized cancer agency of the World Health Organization. IARC's mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer prevention and control.

³ <http://globocan.iarc.fr/>

⁴ These estimates are based on the most recent data available at IARC and on information publicly available on the world-wide web, but more recent figures may be available directly from local sources.

⁵ GLOBOCAN 2008 builds up the global profile of cancer using a number of methods that are dependent on the availability and the accuracy of the data. National sources are used where possible, with local data and statistical modeling used in their absence.

