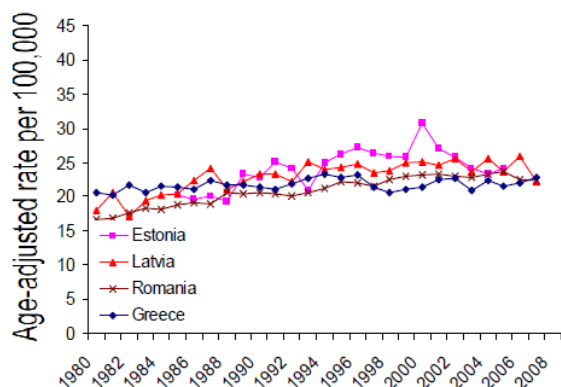


12 August 2010

LARGE DIFFERENCES IN BREAST CANCER MORTALITY TRENDS AMONG THIRTY EUROPEAN COUNTRIES POINT TO POSSIBLE CONTROL STRATEGIES

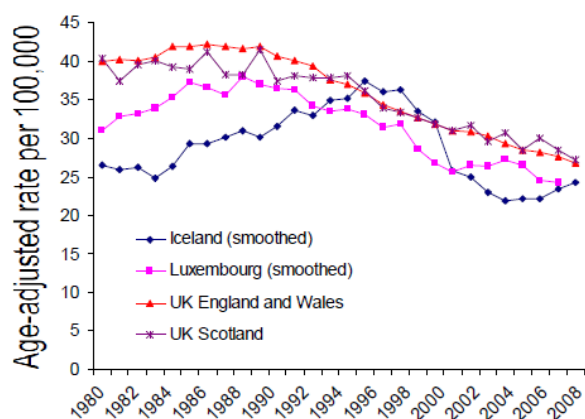
Not all European women equal for breast cancer mortality

A study, led by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) and published today in the [British Medical Journal](#) (BMJ), reports considerable variation in breast cancer mortality trends among European countries. The study looked at rates between 1989 and 2006 and found that for most countries there was an overall reduction in death rates although the extent of the decrease varied considerably. Of the 30 countries considered, half showed death rates in 2006 to be more than 20% lower than in 1989. Only for four countries, Greece, Estonia, Latvia and Romania, was there an overall increase during the same time period.



Managed patient care has high impact on mortality

Decreases in breast cancer mortality have generally been attributed to a combination of earlier detection, in part through screening programs, and improved treatment. The differences in the current report suggest the ways in which breast cancer screening, early detection programmes and treatment policies are implemented in different countries will impact substantially on breast cancer mortality. For most countries the rates indicate signs of significant progress.

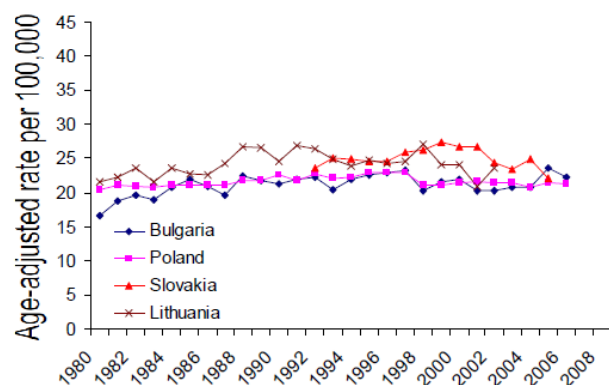


Breast cancer most common cancer in women

Breast cancer is the most common cancer among women in the world with an estimated 1.4 million new cases in 2008, representing 1 in 5 of all new cancers. It is also the most common form of cancer death among women in the world comprising nearly 1 in 8 of all deaths from cancer (ref: [GLOBOCAN 2008](#)). During the time period of this study,

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breast cancer screening and effective treatments have been widely introduced in Europe. Dr Christopher Wild, Director at IARC, stated “There is a need to examine what innovations contributed to this reduction in breast cancer risk in Europe and how these lessons may bring valuable public health benefits globally, as well as in Europe itself. The notable increasing or static trends in mortality in some European countries represent avoidable cancer deaths.”



Most efficient strategies combine screening with quality managed care

The [WHO mortality database](#), on which this study was based, provides annual reported data on mortality statistics by age, sex and cause of death as obtained from civil registration systems in countries. This study endeavoured to harmonise the trends of these data by taking into account the WHO evaluation of data quality, the changes in disease classification that occurred (ICD), interpolating for missing years, and smoothing of small populations. Survival statistics for breast cancer are heavily influenced by the extent of screening within a country. Widespread screening results in the diagnosis of many cancers that are small in size and have a good prognosis. By themselves, breast cancer survival results may be better indicators of screening intensity rather than mortality reduction. Improving the collection of relevant screening and care management data is essential to improve understanding of the disparities in breast cancer mortality in Europe.

Article reference:

Autier P, Boniol M, LaVecchia C, Vatten L, Gavin A, Héry C, Heanue M. Disparities in breast cancer mortality trends between 30 European countries: retrospective trend analysis of WHO mortality database. [BMJ 2010;341:c3620](#)
doi:10.1136/bmj.c3620

GLOBOCAN 2008 reference:

Ferlay J, Shin HR, Bray F, Forman D, Mathers C and Parkin DM. GLOBOCAN 2008, Cancer Incidence and Mortality Worldwide: IARC CancerBase No. 10 [Internet only]. Lyon, France: International Agency for Research on Cancer; 2010. Available from: <http://globocan.iarc.fr>

For more information, please contact

Dr David Forman, Cancer Information Section, at +33 (0)4 72 73 80 56 or formand@iarc.fr;
Or for general communication matters, [Dr Nicolas Gaudin](mailto:com@iarc.fr), IARC Communications at com@iarc.fr

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the [World Health Organization](#). Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release e-mailing list, please write to com@iarc.fr.