

Cancer in Central and South America – a comprehensive analysis

Lyon, France, 30 September 2016 – A series of 17 scientific articles coordinated by the [International Agency for Research on Cancer](#) (IARC), based on the most extensive collation of data on cancer incidence and mortality in Central and South America to date, will be published next week as a supplement issue of *Cancer Epidemiology*. The series provides a comprehensive analysis of recent cancer patterns in the region and can also be accessed on the [IARC Global Cancer Observatory](#) website, along with additional resources and statistics.

“These publications represent the most complete and detailed examination of cancer trends and patterns ever undertaken in Central and South America,” says Dr Christopher Wild, Director of IARC. “They provide a precious tool for governments, health professionals, and decision-makers to better identify risk factors at play in the region, to prioritize preventive interventions, and to plan cancer services to most effectively alleviate the cancer burden.”

Central and South America carries a dual burden of cancer, with elevated rates of both infection-related cancers (which traditionally affect the poorer regions of the world) and lifestyle-related cancers (which are traditionally associated with more affluent regions).

Based on information from 48 cancer registries in 18 countries of Central and South America, the analysis shows that the most commonly diagnosed cancers within the region (in decreasing order of frequency) were those of the prostate, lung, breast, cervix, colorectum, and stomach. These cancer types were also the primary causes of cancer mortality.

The more affluent countries, such as Argentina and Brazil, experienced a high burden of prostate and breast cancers, whereas countries with lower levels of economic development, such as the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Peru, had a higher burden of stomach and cervical cancers. Some striking specific associations were also found, such as the particularly high incidence of gallbladder cancer in Chile.

Between countries, the incidence of and mortality due to all cancers combined varied by 2- to 3-fold. French Guiana, Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina had the highest rates of incidence of all cancers; Uruguay, Cuba, Argentina, and Chile had the highest mortality rates.

For four countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Costa Rica), there were sufficient data to analyse trends over time; the largest increases in incidence between 1997 and 2008 were seen for cancers of the colorectum, prostate, and thyroid. In contrast, the incidence rates of stomach and cervical cancers decreased over the same period.

In addition to providing an overview of the project and describing its background and methods, the papers included in the *Cancer Epidemiology* supplement present detailed information on 14 specific cancer types that are common in the covered region. The papers discuss the reasons for the observed geographical patterns, review what is known about risk factors for these cancers, and outline the prospects for the prevention of each cancer type. More comprehensive information, including cancer statistics for each country in the region and reviews summarizing what is known about the etiology of each cancer, is [available online](#).

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“The data were collected thanks to the tireless activities of the many cancer registries in Central and South America,” says Dr Freddie Bray, Head of IARC’s Section of Cancer Surveillance. “But there remains an overwhelming need to improve the quality and coverage of cancer registration to guide and evaluate future cancer control policies and programmes. The recent inauguration of the IARC Regional Hub at the National Cancer Institute of Argentina in Buenos Aires, as part of IARC’s [Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development](#), is a significant step forward in meeting this objective and furthering collaborative activities in the region.”

Commenting on the importance of the resources now being made available, Ms Silvana Luciani, Regional Advisor, Cancer Prevention and Control, at the [Pan American Health Organization](#), says, “The information provided here contributes significantly in our region to better understand cancer incidence by type of cancer, one of the targets of the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013–2020. Accurate and reliable regional statistics on the burden of cancer are essential to health planners and policy-makers to guide them in developing relevant interventions to prevent and diagnose cancer at early stages.”

Notes to the Editors:

The Cancer in Central and South America Project is a collaboration between the Section of Cancer Surveillance of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the Red de Institutos e Instituciones Nacionales de Cáncer (RINC), and cancer registries throughout the Central and South American region. The project commenced in 2013, with the primary objectives of collating data collected by these cancer registries; presenting the data in a standardized, comparable format; and making them available to cancer research and control communities throughout the region and around the world.

In Central and South America, there are approximately 1 million new cancer diagnoses and 600 000 deaths from cancer each year (GLOBOCAN 2012). The cancer registries participating in this project covered approximately 10% of the population.

For more information, please contact

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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 and 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 emailing list, please write to com@iarc.fr.