

Monograph 8 – Information sheet

Time trends in cancer mortality in South Australia between 1990 and 2011

The risk of cancer death is reducing in South Australia

Cancer now accounts for about 28 per cent of all deaths in South Australia. The number of deaths reflects the combined changes in the risk of getting cancer and the survival prospects of those affected by the disease. Cancer death rates are falling due to prevention and early detection methods, such as screening, and improved cancer treatment.

However, despite reductions in death rates, total numbers of cancer deaths are projected to increase in SA by about 9% in the 10 years to 2011, due to population growth and ageing. This will place more pressure on end-of-life cancer care. Palliative care services need to be further developed and more non-clinical support services provided so that people with advanced cancer can be cared for at home. Ways to provide this support for non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal residents in remote areas must also be identified.

Key results

It is reassuring that between 1990 and 2003 cancer-related deaths, adjusted for age, showed a 10-year reduction of 12% in men and 8% in women.

Men

On average, during a 10-year period:

- There was a 24% reduction in the death rate from lung cancer due to reduced tobacco smoking.
- The death rate for stomach cancers reduced by 26%, mainly due to improved refrigeration, fewer stomach infections (*Helicobacter pylori*), and in some cases, changes in diet including a higher intake of fruit and vegetables and less of salt.
- The death rate for cancers of the large bowel (colon/rectum) and prostate reduced by 17%

and 18% respectively, mainly due to earlier detection and improved treatment.

Women

On average, during a 10-year period:

- The death rate from cervical cancer reduced by 40%, due to a higher number of older women and those in high-risk groups, taking part in cervix screening.
- There was a 19% reduction in the breast-cancer death rate owing to earlier detection through screening mammography and improved treatment.
- The death rate from cancers of the stomach and large bowel (colon/rectum) fell by 33% and 13% respectively.

Measures to further reduce cancer deaths

- Further reducing tobacco smoking
- Adopting a healthier diet high in fruit, vegetables and wholegrain foods, lower in calorie-rich foods, fat (especially saturated fat) and salt
- Limiting or avoiding alcohol consumption
- Having regular physical activity
- Maintaining a healthy body weight
- Using sun protection
- Extending breast and cervix cancer screening
- Introducing bowel cancer screening
- Introducing vaccination for cervix cancer, once the vaccine is available
- Conducting ongoing research into clinical treatment and incorporating the results into evidence-based cancer care.