6 March 2017

RELEASE OF THE CANCER INCIDENCE AND SURVIVAL STATISTICS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND 2011-2015

Legislation designating the N. Ireland Cancer Registry (NICR) as an official producer of statistics came into place 01 April 2012. Under this legislation, the NICR today released the number of new cancer cases diagnosed (incidence) in Northern Ireland in 2015. Website available at: www.qub.ac.uk/nicr.

The yearly average of incidence for patients diagnosed 2011-2015 is presented as a stable estimate of incidence in Northern Ireland (NI), and in various geographic groups. The release also updates cancer incidence trends and survival statistics 1993-2015.

Key facts and figures are presented below.

**Cancer incidence 2011-2015**

- In the period 2011-2015 there were on average 4,557 male and 4,516 female cases diagnosed with cancer each year during 2011-2015 (excluding 3,641 cases per year of Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer).
- Excluding NMSC the odds of developing a cancer by the age of 75 was 1 in 3.4 for men and 1 in 3.8 for women.
- The most common cancers diagnosed among males between 2011 and 2015 were prostate (24% of all cancer in males), colorectal (15%) and lung (15%) while the most common cancers among women were breast (30% of all cancer in females), lung (12%) and colorectal (12%).
- Cancer risk is strongly related to age with 62% of cases occurring in people over the age of 65 years and incidence rates greatest for those aged 80-89 years.

**Cancer incidence trends**

- Over the last ten years the number of cancer cases (excluding NMSC) has increased from 3,786 among men and 3,681 among women in 2006 to 4,650 among men and 4,606 among women in 2015. This increase of 23% in men and 25% in women (24% overall) is largely due to the ageing population.
After adjusting for age, following a steady increase in cancer incidence rates in males since 1999, rates decreased among males during 2009 to 2015 by an average of 0.8% per year. In contrast, female incidence rates have shown a continuous increase by an average of 1.0% per year during 2001 to 2015. These changes reflect increasing rates of lung cancer linked to historic smoking trends among women and increasing breast cancer incidence.

**Cancer site specific incidence**

- Breast cancer cases have increased from 989 cases in 2006 to 1456 cases in 2015 (a 47% increase). After accounting for the ageing NI population, the number of breast cancer cases have increased by an average of 1.3% per year from 1993 to 2015.
- Colorectal cancer cases have increased by 12% in men (567 to 637 cases) and 4% in women (465 to 484 cases) between 2006 and 2015 (8.6% increase overall). After accounting for the ageing NI population, incidence of colorectal cancer increased in males between 2000 and 2012 before declining again until 2015 and decreased significantly in females between 1993 and 2002.
- Lung cancer cases have increased by 17% in men (574 to 671 cases) and 54% in women (369 to 569 cases) between 2006 and 2015. After accounting for the ageing NI population, incidence of lung cancer decreased by an average of 0.7% per year in men between 1993-2015 and increased in females by 3.4% between 2006 and 2015.

**Incidence rates by socio-economic deprivation**

- Cancer incidence is 15% higher in the most deprived communities compared to the NI average and 8% lower in the least deprived communities. Cancer incidence by deprivation varies across cancer sites with incidence of head & neck, oesophagus, stomach, lung, male-colorectal, liver, pancreas, bladder and cervix higher in more deprived areas and incidence of melanoma and prostate cancer higher in the least deprived communities.

**Survival statistics updated**

- Over 54% of all cancer patients diagnosed in 2005-2009 survived five years after diagnosis. More recently, over 20% of patients diagnosed in 2010-2014 died within 6 month of diagnosis, while over 70% of patients were alive one year after diagnosis.
- Five-year net survival has improved for most cancer sites in patients diagnosed in more recent years (2005-2009) when compared to patients diagnosed in earlier years (1993-1999). Marked improvements in survival were observed for the four most common cancers, with five-year net survival rates for patients diagnosed between 2005 to 2009 as follows: female breast (81.1%), colorectal (56.3%), prostate (88.5%), lung (10.3%). However, lung cancer survival remains one of the poorest across cancer sites. Improvements in survival are expected to continue in the period 2011-2015.

- One-year net survival has shown marked improvements for colorectal cancer with survival increasing from 77.0% for patients diagnosed 2005-09 to 81.3% for those diagnosed between 2010 and 2014. This is likely to be a consequence of the introduction of the NI bowel screening programme with an increase in patients diagnosed with early stage disease among those in the screened age-group.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. All the statistics in this release are available at http://www.qub.ac.uk/nicr/
2. About the data
   - New cases of cancer are registered from pathology reports, hospital administration records, and death certificates. GP or hospital charts may also be accessed if the above sources do not yield a reliable registration.
   - Registrations are validated and quality-checked according to internationally recognised standards.
   - Released statistics are not patient identifiable.

3. Incidence is the number of new cases of cancer diagnosed in a particular time and population. It is not equivalent to the number of patients as for some cancer sites, e.g. breast and colorectal, it is possible for a person to be diagnosed with 2 or more separate tumours in the one year.

4. Incidence rates are defined as incidence divided by the population that the incidence arose from; it is usually expressed as cases/100,000. Age-standardised rates, using the 2013 European Standard Population, are used to detect trends over time, or differences between regions, that are not age-related.

5. Five-year survival refers to the proportion of people diagnosed with a cancer who are still alive 5 years later. Age-standardised net survival used here is a survival statistic that has been adjusted for background mortality and age profile between periods. Net survival is the theoretical survival of patients if they could die only from their cancer in question.
6. For more information on the incidence data, please contact:
   Northern Ireland Cancer Registry,
   Centre for Public Health
   Mulhouse Building
   Grosvenor Road
   Belfast BT12 6DP
   Tel: 028 90976028
   Email: nicr@qub.ac.uk
   Website: www.qub.ac.uk/nicr

Media queries to QUB Press Office: Comms.officer@qub.ac.uk / 02890975391