Cancer Council Queensland

A Summary of
Childhood Cancer Incidence in Australia 1983-2006

Cancer is the second leading cause of death among children in Australia, behind injury and poisoning. Beyond the loss of young lives, the burden of childhood cancer extends to the long term adverse health effects experienced by a large proportion of childhood cancer survivors, either because of the cancer itself or as a result of treatment.

Cancer Council Queensland has recently published a report titled Childhood cancer incidence in Australia, 1983 -2006. It was produced by the Viertel Centre for Research in Cancer Control, based on information available from the Australian Paediatric Cancer Registry (APCR). The report presents the most current data on how many children are diagnosed with cancer each year, as well as trends over time for each of the major types of childhood cancer. This circular summarises some of the main points from this report.

What is the Australian Paediatric Cancer Registry?

- The APCR is one of the few national registries of childhood cancer in the world.
- It covers all Australian children aged 0-14 years.
- Information is collected on cancer diagnosis, stage, treatment and survival, with the assistance of all Australian State and Territory cancer registries and major paediatric oncology hospitals.
- Cancer Council Queensland has provided financial support for the APCR since its inception in 1977 and has managed the APCR since 2004.
- Detailed and verified data is currently available for the period 1983-2006.

AUSTRALIAN PAEDIATRIC CANCER REGISTRY

VCRCC Viertel Centre for Research in Cancer Control

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The generosity of the Queensland community and the *Sylvia and Charles Viertel Charitable Foundation* makes our research possible.

How many children are diagnosed with cancer in Australia? (1997-2006)

- In the 10 years from 1997-2006, an average of 618 children under the age of 15 were diagnosed with cancer each year in Australia, corresponding to a rate of 156 per million children per year.
- Overall incidence of childhood cancer was significantly higher among boys, with 337 cases per year (165 per million), compared to girls with 282 cases per year (146 per million).
- Almost half of all childhood cancers were diagnosed among children aged 0-4 years, with 285 cases per year (223 per million), compared to an average of 156 cases per year (117 per million) among children aged 5-9 years and 177 cases per year (131 per million) in the 10-14 age group.
- Leukaemias were the most common type of cancer diagnosed among Australian children, accounting for around one third of all cases (or an average of 207 cases per year), followed by tumours of the central nervous system with 141 cases per year or 23% of all childhood cancers, and lymphomas with 62 cases per year or 10% of the total.

How have rates of childhood cancer incidence changed over time? (1983-2006)

- The trend in incidence rates for all childhood cancers combined increased by an average of 1.7% per year between 1983-1994, but has subsequently remained stable.
- Incidence rates have also been stable among boys since 1994, following an increase of 1.7% per year between 1983-1994, while an ongoing increase of 0.9% per year was observed in incidence rates for girls between 1983-2006.
- Trends by age group were mixed. Among children aged 0-4 years, incidence rates increased by an average of 0.7% per year between 1983-2006, while incidence rates remained stable among children aged 5-9 years. However, within the 10-14 age group, incidence rates increased by 2.7% per year between 1983-1996, with evidence of a possible decrease between 1996-2006.
- Increases in incidence rates over the period 1983-2006 were observed for hepatic tumours (3.3% per year), germ cell tumours (2.2% per year), leukaemias (0.9% per year) and lymphomas (0.7% per year). In contrast, incidence rates for other malignant epithelial tumours and melanomas decreased by 5.8% per year between 1996-2006. There was also some evidence of a possible decreasing trend for tumours of the central nervous system from 1998 onwards.
- It is difficult to interpret differences in incidence rate trends given the limited understanding of the causes of most cases of childhood cancer.

The full report is available at
www.cancerqld.org.au/page/Research_statistics/VCRCC/Statistical_reports
or contact research@cancerqld.org.au for more details.

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