

Breast Cancer Surpasses Lung as Most Diagnosed Cancer



Cancer is the leading cause of death in every country of the world. However, for the first time, female breast cancer has overtaken lung as the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the world.

This is based on findings from a collaborative report, Global Cancer Statistics 2020, from the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), published in *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*.

Cancer incidence and mortality is described according to sex, geography, and levels of social and economic development. The report also discusses associated risk factors and prospects for prevention for each of 10 major cancer types, representing more than 60% of the newly diagnosed cancer cases and more than 70% of deaths from cancer.

According to the report, an estimated 19.3 million new cancer cases and almost 10 million cancer deaths occurred in 2020. Female breast cancer was the most commonly diagnosed cancer, with an estimated 2.3 million new cases, followed by lung, colorectal, prostate, and stomach cancers. The report also shows that 1 in 5 men and women worldwide develop cancer during their lifetime, and 1 in 8 men and 1 in 11 women die from the disease.

An important finding is that the incidence of breast cancer is increasing in countries where rates of breast cancer have been historically low. This may be because of lifestyle and built environment which have an impact on the risk of breast cancer. Obesity/overweight, lack of physical activity, alcohol consumption, delayed childbirth, fewer childbirths and less breastfeeding may be contributing factors.

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Hyuna Sung, lead author of the report explains that death rates of breast cancer among women in transitioning countries were higher compared with the rates among women in transitioned countries, despite the substantially lower incidence rates. Poor outcomes in these countries are attributable to a late-stage presentation. Early detection and timely and appropriate treatment is needed and this can be done through the implementation of evidence-based and resource-stratified guidelines.

Lung cancer remained the leading cause of cancer death with an estimated 1.8 million deaths, followed by colorectal, liver, stomach, and female breast cancers. Lung cancer death rates are 3 to 4 times higher in transitioned countries than in transitioning countries. Approximately two-thirds of lung cancer deaths worldwide are attributable to smoking, hence the disease can be prevented through effective tobacco control policies and regulations.

The report estimates that 28.4 million new cancer cases are projected to occur in 2040. This will be a 47% increase from 2020. The authors caution that the growing rate of incidence could overwhelm health care systems, if left uncontrolled. Therefore, it is important to build a sustainable infrastructure for the dissemination of proven cancer prevention measures and ensure the provision of cancer care in transitioning countries.

Source: [American Cancer Society](#)

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