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Media backgrounder: Highlights of 2011 colorectal cancer statistics

18 May 2011

TORONTO -

Colorectal cancer is the special topic of the *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2011* report, released today by the Canadian Cancer Society.

- Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in Canada and the fourth most common cancer diagnosed overall.
- An estimated 22,200 Canadians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in Canada in 2011. An estimated 8,900 will die from the disease. Approximately one in 14 Canadians will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer in their lifetime.
- Colorectal cancer accounts for 13% of cancers diagnosed in men and 11% of cancers diagnosed in women.

Survival

The five-year relative survival for colorectal cancer in Canada is 63%.

The five-year colorectal cancer survival has improved considerably, from 56% in 1992–94 to 63% in 2004–06. (These numbers don't include Quebec; see glossary.)

Survival depends on how well a person does in the year following their diagnosis. Individuals who survive the first year of a colorectal cancer diagnosis are very likely to continue to do well; the relative survival for an additional five years is approximately 74% for men and 78% for women.

Prevalence

As of January 1, 2007, it is estimated that nearly 99,000 Canadians had been diagnosed with colorectal cancer in the previous 10 years.



Incidence rates

Incidence rates for colorectal cancer have dropped significantly in men and women combined. Rates have declined 0.7% per year since 2000, likely due to changes in risk factors (e.g. improved diets, among others) and increased screening.

Age-standardized incidence rates are higher in men than in women. The higher incidence rate in men is likely due to differences in both biology and risk factors for colorectal cancer.

Between 1983 and 2007, the colorectal cancer incidence rate fell nearly 20% in women.

Despite the decline in incidence *rates* for both men and women, the number of *new cases* of colorectal cancer has increased since 1983. This upward trend in *new cases* can be attributed to an aging and growing population.

Death rates

Death rates for colorectal cancer have declined by 1.5% per year in men and 1.9% per year in women over the period 1997 to 2006. The declines are likely due to improved treatments and more intense screening.

The death rate for colorectal cancer is higher for men than women.

Follow-up care

Intensive follow-up testing after treatment of early stage disease has been shown to increase survival for colorectal cancer. However, improvements are still needed to make sure that patients and their caregivers follow proper follow-up guidelines for continued health.

Glossary

Five-year relative survival is the proportion of people alive five years after their diagnosis, adjusted for the deaths expected in people of the same age in the general population. Relative survival is the most often used method for analyzing the survival of cancer patients across a population. Because of difficulties in correctly ascertaining vital status for Quebec, data for this province could not be included with survival data from other provinces.

Rates (age-standardized) refer to the number of people per 100,000 who are diagnosed with, or die of, cancer. Age-standardization takes into account the different age structures of populations that we want to compare; in this case we compare populations across



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Canada. It's important to recognize that we can't directly compare these rates to those of other countries without further standardizing the rates.

About the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) is the only national charity that supports Canadians with all cancers in communities across the country. No other organization does what we do; we are the voice for Canadians who care about cancer. We fund groundbreaking research, provide a support system for all those affected by cancer and advocate to governments for important social change.

Help us make a difference. Call 1-888-939-3333 or visit cancer.ca today.