

Media Release

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New international research shows Australia leads the world in cancer survival

New research examines cancer survival rates in seven high-income countries

Cancer Council has welcomed a new study that shows Australians diagnosed with cancer have the best chance of survival in the world, but stressed survival rates remain too low for some cancer types.

The study, published in *The Lancet Oncology* and led by researchers at the International Agency for Cancer Research, examined data for over 3.7 million cancers of the oesophagus, stomach, colon, rectum, pancreas, lung, and ovary in seven high-income countries: Australia, Canada, Denmark, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and the UK.

Researchers looked at survival rates for one and five years after diagnosis, to see how countries compared for each cancer type and whether survival rates were improving over time.

Overall, compared to the other countries, Australians with cancer were most likely to survive at least one year after diagnosis for every cancer type measured.

Australia also had the highest five-year survival rates for cancers of the oesophagus (23.5%), stomach (32.8%), colon (70.8%), rectum (70.8%) and pancreas (14.6%) and the second highest survival rates for cancer of the lung (21.4%), ovary (43.2%), trailing behind Canada and Norway respectively.

Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO Cancer Council Australia said, “It is highly encouraging to see that Australia is leading the world in cancer survival. However, there are some cancer types, such as lung and pancreatic cancer, where survival rates are still incredibly low, so we still have a long way to go to ensure that our cancer outcomes are great across the board.

“We also see some communities in Australia with significantly lower survival rates than the national average.”

Professor Sanchia Aranda, continued “Promisingly, the study did show consistent improvements in survival rates over time in all countries, which demonstrates that overall we are getting better at diagnosing and treating cancer. In Australia today, we now have an overall cancer survival rate of almost 70%, which has increased from 50% since 1990.

Professor David Currow, Chief Cancer Officer of NSW and Chief Executive Officer of the Cancer Institute NSW, and an author on the paper, explained how we are working toward continued improvements in cancer survival.

“We know that people being seen at the right place and at the right time increases their chance of being offered life-saving treatment and their chance of long-term survival.

“This means increasing the numbers of people who are having their cancer detected earlier, ensuring that they are referred to a multi-disciplinary cancer care team and ensuring that if surgery is appropriate, they receive it in a hospital performing the procedure regularly.”



The Australian statistics used data from New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia to form a whole country picture. The report also compared survival rates between each state.

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