

National Cancer Registry



Acting manager: Ms Patricia Kellett

In February 2009 the National Cancer Registry (NCR) was incorporated into the National Institute for Occupational Health. The Registry is housed in the Adler Building in Braamfontein which was designed by Sir Herbert Baker and has been declared a listed building (i.e. officially registered as being important because of its architecture or history and therefore protected from being altered or destroyed). The NCR currently has a staff of seven who receive approximately 80,000 cancer notifications annually. The NCR is a pathology-based cancer registry, the only source of data coming from public and private histopathology, cytology and haematology laboratories nationwide. It is a surveillance unit whose major function is to collate and analyse cancer cases diagnosed in pathology laboratories and report annual cancer incidence rates.

In 2001, issues surrounding patient confidentiality resulted in many private pathology laboratories ceasing to submit their data. In the latter part of 2008, a concerted effort by Mrs C Kotzenburg, Cluster Manager: Chronic Diseases, national Department of Health, resulted in a task team being set up to draft regulations for cancer registration. Ms Kellett represented the NCR on this team. The final draft has been completed and is presently with the legal division of the Department of Health. When verified, the regulations will be published in the Government Gazette. Once the Amendment to the Act is passed, private laboratories will be able to disclose patient information without the threat of legal challenge. However, these delays have seriously impacted on the functioning of the NCR as it cannot fulfil its mandate until these issues are resolved. Unless the missing data are received, comparative reports cannot be written and cancer trends will be impossible.

Funding

The NCR is funded primarily by the NHLS and supplemented by the national Department of Health and the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA).

Teaching and training

A training course on cancer coding was presented to the eThekweni Municipality Cancer Surveillance Unit early in 2009.

A short term at the NCR now forms part of the training programme of public health medical specialists from the Wits School of Public Health during their rotation in non communicable diseases.

Surveillance projects

Cancer incidence in South Africa, 2000-2001

Due to staff constraints, The NCR was unable to publish this report; however, analysis on this two-year dataset has been completed and tables are available on the NHLS website (www.nhls.ac.za/div_ncr.html).

Cancer incidence in South Africa, 2002

Data coding and capturing have been completed and the dataset will be ready for analysis during 2009.

Cancer incidence in South Africa, 2003

Cancer coding and data capturing are in progress.

Poster presentation

Ms M Urban (study manager/medical scientist: Cancer Epidemiology Research Group) and Ms Kellett (NCR) presented a poster entitled 'Cancer patterns in South Africa 2001 vs 1991: the influence of HIV' at the CANSA Cancer Research in Action Conference, held in Johannesburg in August 2008.