

Cancer – A Major Global Health Challenge

Cancer is a major healthcare challenge. Globally, the number of people diagnosed with cancer is estimated at around 12.4 million people per year, a figure that is set to rise to 26.4 million by 2030¹. The number of deaths in Europe is projected to increase 11% by 2015, compared to the 2000 level². It is estimated that in Europe alone, one in three people will be affected by cancer in their lifetime⁴. In developing countries, cancer is the second most common cause of death, accounting for approximately one fifth of all deaths¹

Prognosis and survival

However, survival is improving. In the last 20 years, the number of patients surviving cancer has increased significantly. In the US, for all cancers combined 5-year survival is now 66.3% in men and 62.9% in women and in Europe, it is 47.3% in men and 55.8% in women. In 2007, nearly half of all cancer patients can expect to live more than ten years after diagnosis.

What can be attributed to the improvement in survival?

Earlier diagnosis and innovative drugs, such as those in the Roche portfolio, mean more patients are being cured and those with terminal cancers are living longer. The uptake of new drugs has resulted in:

- Nearly half (44%) of the observed improvement in the two-year cancer survival rate between 1992 and 2000 at 50 USA cancer centres⁷
- Around one sixth (14% – 19%) of the inter-country differences in 5-year cancer survival rates across 5 major European countries⁷
- Nearly one third (30%) of the decline in cancer mortality rates seen in 20 countries (including the US and Europe) during the period 1995 – 2003.

Further improvements still need to be made

But cancer still presents society with a major health challenge. It is estimated that one third of all cancers could be cured if they were adequately diagnosed and treated⁴. Cancer currently represents 17% of the total disease burden but only 7% of total healthcare costs, indicating it is not as high a health priority as it needs to be.

Roche in Cancer Care

The Roche Group is the world's leading provider of cancer treatments which include innovative anti-cancer drugs and diagnostics. Genentech, United States, is a wholly owned member of the Roche Group and Roche has a majority stake in Chugai Pharmaceutical, Japan. Our anticancer medicines include five innovative cancer drugs proven to deliver survival benefits to patients with breast, lung, colorectal, pancreatic, gastric and kidney cancer, chronic lymphocytic leukaemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Our portfolio includes: Avastin (bevacizumab), Herceptin (trastuzumab), Xeloda (capecitabine), MabThera (rituximab) and Tarceva (erlotinib).

In addition to our portfolio of cancer medicines, Roche is developing new diagnostic tests that are expected to have a significant impact on disease management for cancer patients in the future. With a broad portfolio of tumour markers for prostate, colorectal, liver, ovarian, breast, stomach, pancreas and lung cancer, as well as a range of molecular oncology tests, Roche will continue to be one of the leaders in providing cancer-focused treatments and diagnostics.

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References

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