The Surveillance of Cancer; Reliable cancer incidence and mortality data are an ever-growing need, particularly in low- and medium-Human Development Index settings.

Only nine low- to medium-Human Development Index countries have high-quality population-based cancer registries, all of which only have regional coverage.

Population-based cancer registry data are an essential foundation of national cancer control planning. If you don’t know your cancer burden, how can scarce resources be targeted at the most appropriate solutions for cancer? – Dr. Eduardo Cazap (Argentina), Past President, Union for International Cancer Control

The Cancer Atlas (http://globocan.iarc.fr), a summary of estimated cancer statistics from which most of the cancer maps in The Cancer Atlas are derived. In countries where no cancer registry data are available, or only very limited information from case series, incidence must be approximated from mortality information (where available) or from incidence in neighboring countries.

Although there are significant disparities in cancer registry development, the number of high-quality cancer registries published in CI5 is increasing. Volume I, covering the early 1960s, had data from 31 cancer registries in 28 countries. The most recent volume (Volume X), covering 2003–07, has data from 290 registries in 68 countries. The multi-agency Global Initiative for Cancer Registry Development (http://gicr.iarc.fr) aims to bring about quantum changes in the availability of high-quality cancer registry data in these regions within the next decade.

Cancer death (or vital) registration data are also important for planning and monitoring cancer control programs. As with cancer registry data, there is wide international variation in the quality and completeness of death certificate information, with many countries in low- and medium-Human Development Index regions having poor quality or a complete absence of vital registration.

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