Infectious and parasitic diseases

Malignant neoplasms

Cardiovascular diseases

Unintentional injuries

Other causes

In South Africa, for example, infectious and parasitic diseases account for 40% of premature deaths, while cancer and cardiovascular disease each account for only 10%. The profiles of cancer substantially vary by HDI, reflecting differences in lifestyle factors, enforcement of tobacco marketing, the built environment, and the availability of detection and diagnostic services that are associated with social and economic development. Among the top 5 most commonly diagnosed cancers and 5 leading causes of cancer death by HDI, and separately for India and China, there are 10 different cancer types that rank within the top five even within these six broad “regions.”

The rising cancer burden will hit the lower HDI countries the hardest. Low and medium HDI countries, many of which are 41-equipped to deal with the present situation, are projected to have the greatest percentage increase in the burden of cancer in the coming decades.

While infectious causes of death dominate in South Africa, cancer is the most common cause of death in Japan.

By 2040, the cancer burden will double in low-HDI countries, which are least equipped to deal with the pending cancer epidemic.

Understanding the transition from infection-related cancers to lifestyle-related cancers in many low- and middle-income countries is vital for planning tailored cancer control programs to reduce the future deaths and suffering from the disease.