Regional Diversity

OCEANIA

Geographic dispersion, long distances, the impact of climate change, and a double burden of infection- and lifestyle-related cancers confront the nations of this vast region.

An estimated 28,000 new cancer diagnoses and 64,000 cancer deaths occurred in 2018 in the subregions of Oceania, namely Australia, Melanesia, Micronesia, and Polynesia. Cancers of the female breast (43,600 new cases, 44% of all cancers), prostate (39,600, 19%), and colorectum (26,900, 12%) are also commonly diagnosed in the region. Lung cancer accounts for the greatest number of cancer deaths (14,300, 27%), followed by colorectal (9,100, 12%) and female breast cancer (4,800, 9%). Skin cancers (melanoma and non-melanoma) are the most common cancers and represent a significant public health issue, particularly in Australia and New Zealand.

Given the relatively large proportion of the region’s inhabitants in Australia and New Zealand, the vast majority of the region’s cancer cases and deaths (91% and 89%, respectively) occur in these two countries. Papua New Guinea is unique among the other nations in terms of its relatively large population and burden (1.4 million, 12,000 new cases, 7,000 deaths), most of the Pacific Island countries and territories feature small populations that are often spread across many remote islands.

Cancer profiles vary considerably across subregions. In Australasia and Polynesia, the cancers with the highest incidence rates include female breast, prostate, lung, and colorectum. In contrast, in Melanesia and Micronesia, breast cancer incidence rates are almost half those of the above regions, and cervical cancer is the second-leading cancer, with rates two to three times higher than the average rate in the region.

Although lung cancer is the fifth most commonly diagnosed cancer in the region, it is the leading cause of cancer death.

Delivering cancer services in our small island nations is a challenge. Regional solutions built collaboratively with local leaders have been shown to provide sustainable benefits.

— Dr. Rachel D. Franklin, Director, Public Health Division at the Pacific Community, New Caledonia

### FIGURE 23.1

Estimated number of new cancer cases vs. deaths and distribution (%), by type, both sexes, 2018

- **Cases**
  - Breast: 14,800
  - Prostate: 14,000
  - Colorectum: 12,300
  - Melanoma: 6,600
  - Lung: 13,100
  - NHL: 4,500
  - Leukaemia: 3,000
  - Pancreas: 4,300
  - Larynx: 720
  - Other cancers: 3,900

- **Deaths**
  - Breast: 9,800
  - Male prostate: 6,700
  - Colorectum: 4,500
  - Melanoma of skin: 4,300
  - Lung: 2,800
  - NHL: 1,300
  - Leukaemia: 900
  - Pancreas: 540
  - Larynx: 75
  - Other cancers: 720

Total estimated 181,000
Total estimated 68,000

Australia and New Zealand have the highest skin melanoma incidence rates in the world.

### FIGURE 23.2

Incidence and mortality rates in Oceania, by sex and region, 2018

#### FIGURE 23.2.1

Cervical cancer incidence in Oceania, age-standardized rate (world) per 100,000, 2018

- Australia & New Zealand: 2.0
- Western Europe: 6.1–12.6
- Southern Africa: 6.0–10.0
- North America: 2.0
- Western Pacific: 2.0
- Southeast Asia: 2.0
- South America: 6.9
- Africa: 2.0
- Middle East: 2.0
- Eastern Europe: 2.0
- Eastern Asia: 2.0
- Latin America: 2.0
- South East Asia: 2.0
- Central America: 2.0
- Other: 2.0

Australia has achieved high HPV vaccine and cervical cancer screening coverage, which is predicted to reduce cervical cancer rates to fewer than four new cases per 100,000 women by around 2028.

Cervical cancer incidence rates in the region range from 6 cases per 100,000 female population in Australia and New Zealand to 25 or more in Fiji and Papua New Guinea.