2022 NPCR MAINE SUCCESS STORY

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Cancer Among Older Adults in Maine

National Program of Cancer Registries
SUCCESS STORY

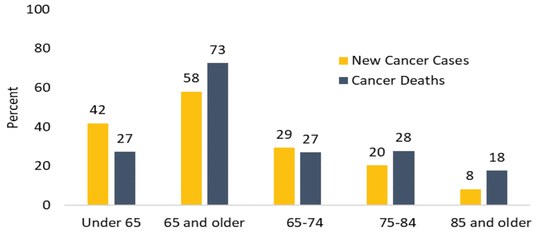
SUMMARY

Maine has one of the oldest and rurally based populations in the United States, and cancer is the leading cause of death in Maine. Age is a non-modifiable, yet important risk factor for cancer diagnosis. The Maine Cancer Registry (MCR) reviewed data on cancer incidence and mortality among Mainers 65 and older over the past decade to understand trends in this important and growing population group.

CHALLENGE

More than half of cancer incident cases and nearly three-quarters of cancer deaths in Maine over the last decade were among Mainers 65 and older (Figure 1). Little is known about the differences in stage at diagnosis within this age group compared with adults under 65 years or among sub-groups of adults 65 and older.

Figure 1. Percentage of Total (All Sites) New Cancer Cases and Cancer Deaths Occurring by Age Group, Maine, 2009-2018



SOLUTION

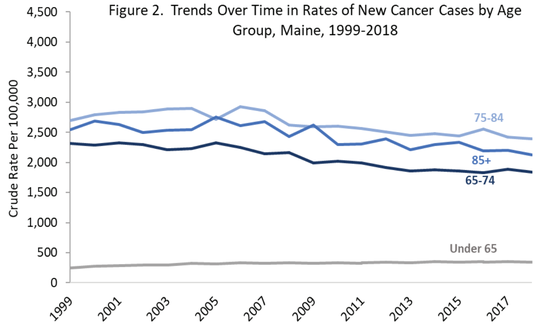
SEER*Stat was used to analyze MCR incidence data, for diagnosis years 1999-2018, by age (under 65 years, 65 years and older, 65-74 years, 75-84 years, and 85 years and older). Mortality data were analyzed using vital records from the same period. These data were compared by sex, site, and stage at diagnosis to assess differences across age groups. Differences in stage by geography, type of facility and area poverty were explored. Joinpoint was used to assess trends over time.

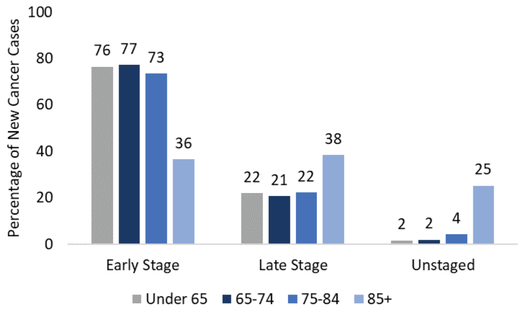
Results were shared with Maine Cancer Leadership team members, at a Maine CDC brownbag seminar, NAACCR Summer Forum 2022, and with partners, including the Maine Cancer Coalition. Findings were included as a special topic in the 2021 Maine Cancer Snapshot and as a standalone report to be released in November 2022.

RESULTS

Cancer incidence (Figure 2) and mortality rates in the 65 years and older group declined significantly over the last two decades in Maine (1999-2018). However, rates remain higher than the U.S., which mirrors overall patterns in cancer incidence and mortality. Site-specific cancer rates were consistently higher among Maine males than females 65 and older. A larger proportion of prostate, colorectal, lung and bronchus, and pancreatic cancer diagnoses among the 85 and older age group were late or unstaged compared with the 65-74- and 75-84-year age groups (Figure 3 for example of prostate). More than half of unstaged cancers among the oldest age group (85 and older) were reported only through death certificates or autopsy findings. No clear trend emerged when exploring differences in stage at diagnosis by metropolitan versus non-metropolitan county or lower income areas in Maine.

Figure 2. Trends Over Time in Rates of New Cancer Cases by Age Group, Maine, 1999-2018





SUSTAINING SUCCESS

The MCR shared findings from this work through a variety of forums and plans to continue discussing these results with local partners in the Maine Cancer Coalition. As the 65 and older population grows in the coming years, a more detailed understanding of the cancer experience for older age groups may benefit cancer prevention, treatment, and end-of-life care. Further exploration of underlying causes of differences in stage at diagnosis across age groups might inform efforts to improve care, diagnosis, and treatment for Mainers aged 65 and older.

REGISTRY CONTACT INFORMATION

207-287-5272
Maine Cancer Registry Website

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

REFERENCES

Maine Cancer Registry, Maine CDC, Department of Health and Human Services, November 2020 NPCR-CSS data submission.
Maine Mortality File. Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Data, Research, and Vital Statistics. 2021.