

2023 NPCR PACIFIC REGIONAL SUCCESS STORY

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The Next Step in the US Pacific Data Visualization: Geomapping Cancer in the Republic of Palau

National Program of Cancer Registries SUCCESS STORY

SUMMARY

As part of a pilot project, the Pacific Regional Central Cancer Registry (PRCCR), working closely with the Palauan cancer registrar, geomapped the Republic of Palau’s cancer cases diagnosed in 2018 and 2019. The pilot project aimed to determine how much time and effort was needed to geomap cancer cases, given the unique challenges of small island geographies in the US Pacific region, and to determine if local public health programs would use a cancer geomap to make data-driven decisions.

CHALLENGE

- Palau is a freely associated US Pacific Island country with individual states not included in US geomapping tools commonly used for public health.
- The entire country, including 16 states, is under one US ZIP Code (96940). Most streets do not have house numbers, and most cancer patients use Post Office boxes when sharing their addresses or are simply registered under their respective Palauan states.
- The PRCCR has specific data fields that can provide more granular geographical data (PARRISH, which is smaller than a county in a US state).
- After the boundary map layers were determined, the cancer registrar assigned all cancer cases to a geomap area manually.

SOLUTION

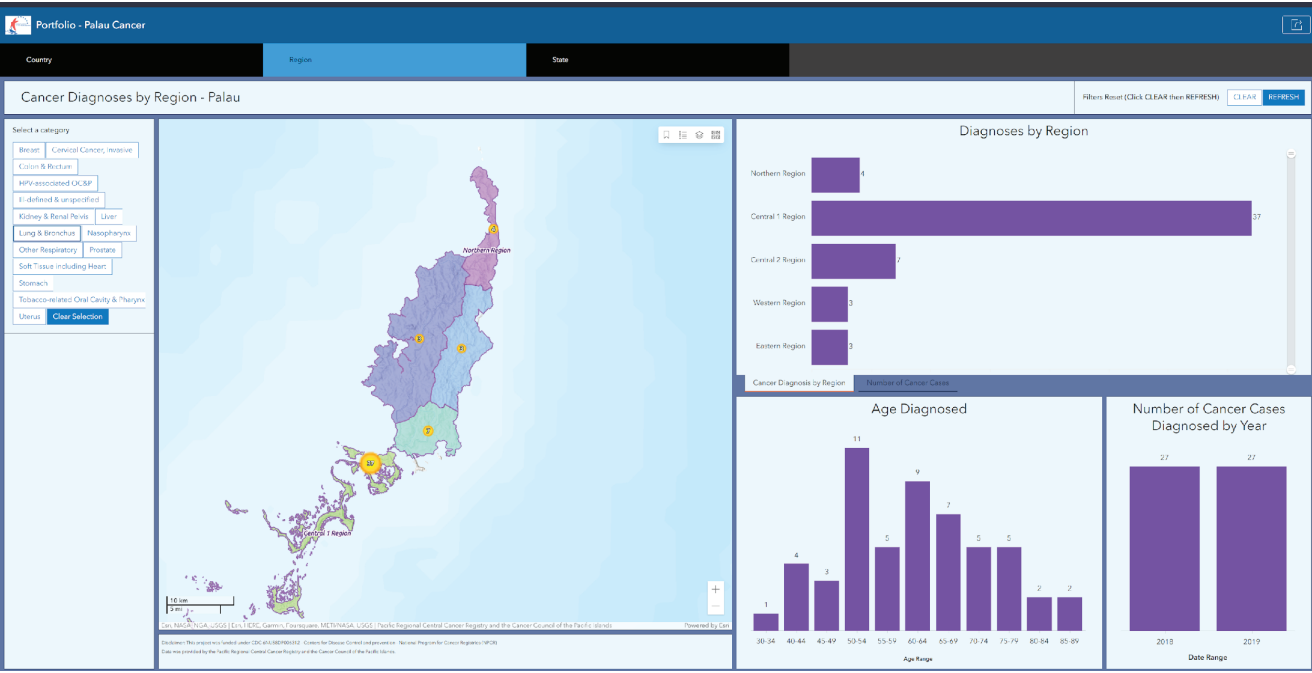
- Extra funding was secured to hire a geographic information systems professional to help design the missing mapping resources.
- PRCCR had to engage the public health professionals in Palau to help define meaningful geographic categories for visualizing the cancer data.
- The Palauan cancer registrar had to review and assign each cancer case to the appropriate geographic category manually. If only a PO Box was provided as an address, the cancer registrar had to follow up with the patient (or a family member) via phone to confirm the state.

RESULTS

- A better understanding of the spatial allocation of cancer cases allowed Palauan public health professionals to adjust the distribution of their cancer screening and prevention resources.
- All participants agreed that this was a very labor-intensive undertaking but worth the effort of expansion, if funding allows.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

- PRCCR is working with the Palau cancer registrar to geocode the 2020 cancer cases, to extend the current dataset.
- PRCCR is introducing a PRCCR-specific user dictionary data item to integrate Palau's geo categories into AbsPlus, our cancer case abstraction software.
- PRCCR is also seeking extra funding to launch a new pilot project to geocode Guam's cancer cases, since Guam's island characteristics differ significantly from Palau's.



STORY QUOTE

“I never imagined you can grasp so much just by looking at a cancer map.”
– Lymona Refugia, CTR, Pacific Regional Central Cancer Registrar

REGISTRY CONTACT

<https://pacificcancer.org/>



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