Citation

Abstract
Objective: Warangal district in Andhra Pradesh, southern India, records over many cancer cases each year. We aimed to describe the frequency, distribution, and assess quality of management and subsequent outcomes from cancer in one large hospital in the district.

Methods: We reviewed data of all patients admitted with different types of cancer to a district government hospital for the years 2003 to 2006. For these years, details of the particular cancer patients admitted and management were abstracted from the medical files.

Findings: During these four years, 1753 patients were admitted in the hospital with different types of cancer. More detailed data from the years 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 reveals that older people are more prone to any type of cancer. Incidence of cancer is more in females. Most common type of cancer in females is cervix cancer in this part of country [30%]. Women above 40 age are prone to breast and ovarian cancers [20%]. The most common type of cancer in males is mouth cancer [25%].

Conclusion: It is likely that these findings reflect the situation in many rural hospitals of the southern India region. Even without an increase in resources, there appear to be significant opportunities for reducing cancer incidence by better medical management and further development on the reduction of cancer.

INTRODUCTION
Pharmacoepidemiology is described as a bridge science because it spans clinical pharmacology, drug utilization, and epidemiology (Strom, et al, 1990). Pharmacoepidemiology is the “study of the use and effects of drugs in large numbers of persons” (Esmond, et al, 2005). Cancer epidemiology is the study of the incidence of cancer as a way to infer possible trends and causes. Modern epidemiological methods are closely linked to current concepts of disease and public health policy. Over the past 50 years, great efforts have been spent on gathering data across medical practice, hospital, provincial, state, and even country boundaries, as a way to study the interdependence of environmental and cultural factors on cancer incidence.

Cancer epidemiology must contend with problems of lead time bias and length time bias. Lead time bias is the concept that early diagnosis may artificially inflate the survival statistics of a cancer, without really improving the natural history of the disease. Length bias is the concept that slower growing, more indolent tumors are more likely to be diagnosed by screening tests, but improvements in diagnosing more cases of indolent cancer may not translate into better patient outcomes after the implementation of screening programs. A similar epidemiological concern is over diagnosis, the tendency of screening tests to diagnose diseases that may not actually impact the patient’s longevity. This problem especially applies to prostate cancer (Brawley, 2004). In some Western countries, such as the USA (Jemal, et al, 2005) and the UK (Cancer: BBC News online, 2005) cancer is overtaking cardiovascular disease as the leading cause of death. In many Third world countries cancer incidence appears much lower, most likely because of the higher death rates due to infectious disease or injury. With the increased control over malaria and tuberculosis in some Third world countries, incidence of cancer is expected to rise; this is termed the epidemiologic transition in epidemiological terminology.

Cancer epidemiology closely mirrors risk factor spread in various countries. Hepatocellular carcinoma (liver cancer) is rare in the West but is the main cancer in China and neighbouring countries, most likely due to the endemic presence of hepatitis B and aflatoxin in that population. Similarly, with tobacco smoking becoming more common in various Third world countries, lung cancer incidence has increased in a parallel fashion.

India and the world have crossed over to the new millennium, not to speak of a new century. It is thus an appropriate time not just to look back at the past, but to...
reflect on our needs and desires for the future. The first is
that of Clinical Epidemiology, which is an essential area for
integrating the health sciences as well as a pointer to the
future trends. The second is that of Clinical Pharmacology,
which has suddenly caught the imagination of people after
the new WTO agreement. The meeting point of these two
fields is therefore bound to generate sparks and ultimately
produce an offspring. This offspring is already well
established in certain countries. Its name is
‘Pharmacoepidemiology’.

Epidemiology is the study of distribution and determinants
diseases in populations. During its progress forward,
epidemiology has inculcated precise and strict
methodologies for the study of diseases. The application of
these methodologies for the study of the use of and the
effects of drugs in large number of people is the discipline of
Pharmacoepidemiology.

The past reports of epidemiological studies of cancer reveal
that the major cause of death of poor people in India is oral
as well as cervical cancer which made me take up the study
of epidemiology of cancer in this part necessary.

METHODS

To evaluate differences in risk between populations requires
incidence rates, derived from population based cancer
registries, which aim to record information on all new cases
of cancer occurring in a defined population.

We collected and reviewed data of all patients admitted to
any type of cancer to the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial
(MGM) Hospital, a district level government hospital in the
city and district of Warangal, for the years 2003 to 2006.
The MGM Hospital is a 550-bed hospital located in the
northern Telangana region of Andhra Pradesh. It is the
referral hospital for cancer patients from Warangal district,
although some cancer patients come from outside the district
(in this study, >92% of patients were from Warangal). Most
patients presenting to other hospitals in the district are
transferred to MGM Hospital. Total in-patient admissions to
the hospital average about 300 per day with many patients
(usually admitted with fever) discharged within one day.

After medical checkup in a casualty ward, cancer patients
are admitted to the Oncology; cancer care unit, which
contains 20 beds and is staffed by four doctors and four
nurses. Patients requiring radiation therapy are referred to
the four-bedded Radiology intensive care unit, which has
two doctors and two nurses.

Data were collected retrospectively from medical files. Only
patients who were hospitalized were included in the study.
Patients with cancer were identified from specific codes
recorded at the time of admission. For patients admitted
during 2003, 2004 2005 and 2006, information regarding
gender, age, type of cancer, medication, treatment and
outcome was abstracted from the medical records onto a data
sheet. The data from all case sheets were entered into a
database to calculate descriptive statistics on 2003, 04, 05 &
2006 presentations.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

India is a country with over a billion in population. Each
individual in the country has at one time or the other taken a
drug. In many instances, a person takes more than one drug,
and that too for a period of time. Unlike the West, where
drug usage is strictly prescription based, ‘over the counter’
drugs are freely available in India. This leads to misuse and
its consequences. To complicate matters, the people of India
utilize various systems of medicine in Allopathy,
Homeopathy, Ayurveda, Siddha, etc. In such a scenario, the
discipline of Pharmacoepidemiology promises to maintain a
close watch over the use of drugs and their effects on people.
If this monitoring and reviewing process is absent, the
pharmacological effects of drugs, their adverse effects,
interactions and misuse can play havoc with the health
system in this country.

A few examples are needed to drive home the point. In the
1930’s, the marketing of elixir of sulphanilamide dissolved
in diethylene glycol resulted in the death of over 100
children (1). In the 1960’s, pregnant ladies who ingested
thalidomide gave birth to children with phocomelia. (2). In
the 1970’s, practolol usage led to oculomucocutaneous
syndrome (3). In the last two decades, many drugs have been
withdrawn from the market

because of serious ADRs. In India though, inspite of the
large volume of drugs being consumed, hardly any major
problem with drugs have been recognized. Could that be due
to the lack of pharmacoepidemiologists (Himanshu,et
al,2005)

The sort of problems experienced by the world in drug usage
will not disappear overnight. It will only increase as one sees
from the huge array of new drugs entering the market. Thus
the potential of pharmacoepidemiology for addressing these
problems become clear
Geographical location, genetic makeup, culture, physical exercise etc. For example, in India mouth cancer is common in the regions where betel nut chewing, tobacco consumption in the form of chewing or smoking is prevalent. Reverse smokers are more at risk developing cancer of palate (Lee, et al., 1996).

Epidemiological studies have shown that 70 to 90% of all cancers are due to environmental exposures. Life style related factors are the most important and preventable among the environmental exposures. Tobacco consumption either chewing or smoking accounts for 50% of all cancers in men. Dietary practices reproductive and sexual practices etc. account for 20 to 30% of cancers. Comparatively older people are more prone to cancers. Brain cancer and blood cancers are common in children. Men above 50yrs are prone to prostate cancer while women above 45yrs are prone to breast, cervical and ovarian cancers (Roger, et al., 2001).

This study reviews known causes of cancer and quantifies the proportion of the cancer burden in southern India that they explain. The quantities presented measure the changes in the occurrence of the disease that we would expect following the removal of those causes; in other words, the potential impact of primary prevention. Numbers of cases and deaths are attributed to broad categories of causal factors for use in public health planning. With the work presented the authors aim to providing a source of objective and quantitative information to help public health planners, administrators, service providers as well as the general public in their actions to prevent cancer. The study presents comprehensive data on cancer incidence for over south Indian populations. The time-period covered is 2003-2006, making available information on patterns and trends of cancer for over 40 years for the older-established cancer registries.

Almost all patients were direct admissions to MGM Hospital; very few patients were transferred from small rural hospitals surrounding Warangal city. During 2003-2006, 1753 patients were admitted to the hospital with any type cancer (Table 1).

![Figure 1](image1.png)

The most patients in one year were 607 in 2003 among them 156, 138, 95 patients with cervix, mouth and breast cancers respectively. Breast cancer incidence was more and increased every year from 2003 to 2006. Cervix cancer incidence was decreased. (Fig 2) Women outnumbered Men with all cancer types (Fig 1). Two thirds of patients were aged in between 40-50 (Fig 3).
TREATMENT IN BREAST CANCER

There are four stages in breast cancer. Treatment approach depends on the stage of cancer. Stage I, II, and IIIA require surgery followed by adjuvant treatment with radiotherapy or chemotherapy. Stage IIIB requires chemotherapy followed by surgery and radiotherapy, and stage IVA requires systemic therapy with drugs like hormones, 5-Flourouracil, Methotrexate, Cyclophosphamide & Doxorubicin along with supportive therapy, which is effective. Breast conservation therapy with lumpectomy for small tumors is possible now with limited surgery, post-operative radiotherapy, and chemotherapy. This option is proffered by younger patients.

TREATMENT IN ORAL CANCER

In early period oral malignancy occurs in two stages i.e., T1 and T2. In both T1 and T2 stages either surgery or radiotherapy is effective. In advanced stage combination of surgery and radiotherapy is required. Radiotherapy is either prior to surgery or after surgery depending on the stage and nature of cancer. In oral, laryngeal and hypo laryngeal cancer the latest protocol is organ preservation, in which the patient is subjected to concomitant chemo irradiation. I.e., combination of radiation and chemotherapy with 5-Flourouracil and cisplatin.

TREATMENT IN CERVICAL CANCER

There are four stages in cervical cancer i.e., stage Ia, Ib, IIA, IIb, IIIa. IIIb, IVa and IVb. In stage Ia, Ib and IIa surgery or radiotherapy results are equal. Concomitant chemo irradiation is current choice of treatment. In more than stage IIb disease, chemo irradiation for bulky tumors (having more than 4 cm in size) includes single agent cisplatin along with radiotherapy. In stage IVa and IVb radiotherapy is effective for palliation.

This study has been carried out in the Oncology department MGM Hospital Warangal which caters to neighboring districts like Nalgonda, Khammam, Karimnagar, Adilabad and Rangareddy. 1753 patients were registered from January 2003 to December 2006.

CONCLUSIONS

From this study

It was found that older people are more prone to any type of cancer.

Incidence of cancer is more in females. Most common type of cancer in females is cervix cancer in this part of the country. It accounts for 30%.

Women above 40 age are prone to breast and ovarian cancers. It accounts for 20%.

The most common type of cancer in males is mouth cancer. It accounts for 25%.

References

Author Information

Nagulu Malothu, M.Pharm, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of pharmacology and clinical pharmacy, Vagdevi College of Pharmaceutical sciences

Uday Kiran Veldandi
Department of Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacy, Kakatiya Medical College, Kakatiya University

Narsimha Reddy Yellu
Department of Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacy, Kakatiya Medical College, Kakatiya University

Rama Krishna Devarakonda
Department of Pharmacology and Clinical Pharmacy, Kakatiya Medical College, Kakatiya University

Nalini Yadala
Department of Medicine, Kakatiya Medical College