



This Issue in the Journal

The control of melanoma in New Zealand

M Sneyd, B Cox

From the literature we identified activities which could reduce the burden of melanoma in New Zealand, and estimated the effect of each on the numbers of new cases and deaths. The best methods for reducing this burden in New Zealand are avoidance of excessive sun exposure and early diagnosis of melanoma. A reduction of 10% in the numbers of people getting severely sunburnt could reduce the number of melanomas by about 28 per year; about 4 deaths per year could be prevented by follow-up of people at high risk; and diagnosing 10% more melanomas earlier, when they are thin, could prevent approximately 29 deaths per year.

Confirming a diagnosis of hereditary colorectal cancer: the impact of a Familial Bowel Cancer Registry in New Zealand

P James, S Parry, J Arnold, I Winship

New Zealand has a high incidence of colorectal cancer of which at least 5% will have a known genetic cause. The New Zealand Familial Bowel Cancer Registry, or specialised multidisciplinary unit, was established in 1996 to facilitate the identification of families likely to have a genetic cause of bowel cancer. The Registry maintains a confidential national register of participating families, and facilitates education, genetic testing, bowel screening, and optimal management for affected individuals and their relatives.

Multidisciplinary treatment of colorectal cancer in New Zealand: survival rates from 1997–2002

J Keating, D Yong, G Cutler, J Johnston

Bowel cancer, comprising colon and rectal cancer, is second only to lung cancer in the “league table” of cancer deaths in New Zealanders. This paper documents the results of treatment of bowel cancer in metropolitan New Zealand in the period 1997 to 2002. The chance of cure of bowel cancer, usually taken as surviving to 5 years, is approaching 60%. Significant gains have been made in the safety of surgery and in the reduction of local recurrence of rectal cancer following surgery. Further reduction in the death toll of bowel cancer will need detection of the disease at an earlier stage or screening as has started in the last two months in Australia.

Osteosarcoma in New Zealand: an outcome study comparing survival rates between 1981–1987 and 1994–1999

H Curry, G Horne, P Devane, H Tobin

Osteosarcoma is a form of cancer which arises from bone. It is rare, affecting up to 20 people per year in New Zealand. This study has looked at how many people survive for more than 5 years after having treatment for this type of cancer. We compared a group of patients from 1981–1987 with a group from 1994–1999. We found there was a trend of improved survival in the 1994–1999 group. The survival of patients with a cancer in a single limb only (who were younger than 40 years) had a 60% likelihood of surviving for greater than 5 years. This is similar to international standards. These results are encouraging for patients with this type of cancer.