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COMPLETE PREVALENCE OF CANCERS IN EUROPE: RESULTS FROM THE SURVEILLANCE OF RARE CANCERS IN EUROPE PROJECT (RARECARE) STUDY.

Sandra Mallone [1]; Andrea Tavilla [1]; Daniela Pierannunzio [1]; Gemma Gatta [2]; Annalisa Trama [2]; Jan Maarten Van der Zwan [3]; Sabine Siesling [3]; Renée Otter [3]; Riccardo Capocaccia [1]; RARECARE Working Group

[1] Centro nazionale di Epidemiologia, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Viale Regina Elena 299, Roma, Italia - sandra.mallone@iss.it
[2] Fondazione IRCCS "Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori", Via Venezian 1, Milano, Italia
[3] Comprehensive Cancer Centre North East, Groningen, Nederland

Intoduction
Complete prevalence of cancers is an important indicator of cancer burden on health-care system and on the population.

Objectives
To estimate the complete prevalence of rare and frequent cancers for the European population at 2003.

Materials and Methods
Cancer registry data with diagnosis during the period 1988-2002 and vital status information available up 2003, were analyzed. For each of the 228 cancer entities (both rare and frequent) defined by the RARECARE group of experts, fifteen-year prevalence proportion was first calculated from the pool of the participating registries with data available during the whole considered period. From the same dataset, incidence and survival parametric models were estimated to obtain the completeness index. Finally the complete prevalence (i.e. the overall proportion of prevalent cases, irrespective of the time from diagnosis) and its standard error were calculated from the 15-year prevalence, the corresponding completeness index estimate, and their variances.

Results
194 cancers were identified as rare (incidence rate ≤6/100,000) and 34 as frequent. We estimated that there were about 2,500,000 (0.5% of the population) and 9,500,000 (1.9% of the population) rare and frequent 15-year prevalent cancers respectively in Europe, at the beginning of 2003. Relative survival rates were lower (5-yr RS = 46 vs. 65) and age at diagnosis was younger (60 vs. 67) for rare than for frequent cancers. After adjustment for cancer survivors diagnosed before 1988, complete prevalence were estimated to be as high as 4 and 12 million persons in Europe, for rare and frequent cancers, respectively.

Conclusions
These results, which have not been reported elsewhere to our knowledge, would be useful for planning healthcare and resource allocation to cancers cases, both rare and frequent, across Europe.