

## INTRODUCTION

This monographic issue presents the levels and time trends up to 2010 of the mortality, incidence and prevalence of the major cancers in all Italian regions. It provides the first systematic and comprehensive picture of the regional cancer burden in Italy, the patterns of which are still quite differentiated, particularly from North to South.

Cancer mortality data at the regional level are available from official statistics provided by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), with a delay of 3 to 4 years. Incidence, survival and prevalence are provided by population-based cancer registries, nowadays covering about 25-30% of the national population (concentrated mostly in the central-northern areas). These high-quality data sources provide valuable information for cancer monitoring and surveillance, with a few years' delay, but the cancer incidence refers to a population sample that is not representative of the national population. The regional cancer burden estimates in this monograph complete the picture of the cancer burden in Italy at the regional level and describe trends for the near future.

Updated cancer burden estimates at the national and regional level are essential to monitor the spread of the disease, to define priorities in health care management, and to develop cancer control programs. These data are even more relevant now that public health management in Italy has evolved towards a network of regional health systems. The distribution of screening programs over the country, the general survival improvements produced by diagnostic and therapeutic advancements, combined with the aging of the population, will certainly increase the demand for oncological services,

thereby enhancing the need for epidemiological measures to identify priorities and allocate resources.

The present study is the result of a research project named "I TUMORI IN ITALIA", established by the Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, and the Fondazione IRCCS "Istituto Nazionale dei Tumori", Milan, in collaboration with the network of Italian cancer registries (AIRTum). The major goal of the project is to provide systematic and up-to-date estimates of epidemiological indicators for major neoplasms at the national and regional level. The project's results are diffused through a cancer statistics database accessible at the website [www.tumori.net](http://www.tumori.net) and have been recently included in the Italian version of the WHO *Health for All* database ([www.istat.it/sanita/Health/](http://www.istat.it/sanita/Health/)).

The first paper of the monograph presents the cancer control situation in Italy and an overview of potential priorities for future strategies. After a detailed description of the applied methodology and its validation in the regions covered by cancer registration, the Italian regional cancer profiles are presented in separate papers for major cancer sites including stomach, colorectum, lung, female breast, and prostate, and for all cancers combined. The last two articles focus on cancer prevalence time trends in Italy and on cancer burden estimates in the North, Center and South, as a basis for orienting cancer control priorities in these macro-areas.

The information in the present volume is offered to a scientific audience, to cancer planners, and to the international community as a contribution to the international debate on cancer control.

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