

Malignant Diseases in Iraq: An Overview of the Available National Published Data

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Abstract

Malignant diseases have become a major challenge to the healthcare system in Iraq. It is estimated that malignant disease accounts for 5,6% of all deaths in Iraq. The aim of this paper is to review the available national data about Malignant diseases in Iraq.

Malignant diseases have become a major challenge to the healthcare system in Iraq. It is estimated that malignant disease accounts for 5,6% of all deaths in Iraq [1,2,3]

In the largest series of 63923 Iraqi patients with various types of newly diagnosed cancer registered by the Iraqi Ministry of Health from all Iraqi provinces with exception of 3 Northern provinces (Sulaimania, Erbil, and Dohouk) during five-year period (2000-2004), breast cancer ranked first and accounted for 16% of all Iraqi patients with malignant disease [3,4,5].

Malignancies of the lungs ranked second and accounted for 8% of all malignant disease in Iraq, but they ranked first in Iraq males patients with malignant diseases.

Leukemia was the third most common malignant disease in Iraq accounting for 7% of all malignancies. Table-1 shows the type of malignancies in Iraq by primary tumor site (Adapted from The New Iraqi Journal of Medicine with kind permission of the editor in chief).

The four most common malignancies among males were lung and bronchus malignancies, bladder malignancies, leukemias and Non-Hodgkin lymphoma accounting for about 37.7% of all malignancies in males.

The four most common malignancies among

females were malignancies of the breast, leukemias, malignancies of reproductive organs (uterus including cervix and corpus), and malignancies of brain and CNS, accounting for about 47.5% of all malignancies in females. Breast malignancies accounted for 31% of all new malignant disease among females[3,4,5].

The pattern of malignant disease in Iraq was rather different from the pattern of malignancies in other countries like United States of America. The four most commonly diagnosed types of malignant disease among males in the United States of America were malignancies of the prostate, lung and bronchus, colon and rectum, and bladder, accounting for about 57% % of malignant disease in males[6]. The four most commonly diagnosed types of malignancies among females in the United States of America were malignancies of the breast, lung and bronchus, colon and rectum, and uterine corpus, accounting for about 56 % of malignancies in females [6].

Malignancies of the lung and bronchus was the second leading cause of malignancies in the United States of America accounting for 15% of all newly diagnosed malignancies in females.

Malignancies of the lung and bronchus in United States of America females accounted for a higher percentage than Iraqi males. This difference was attributed to the high incidence of smoking in females in the United States of America [3].

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Table1. The type of malignancies in Iraq by primary tumor site (Adapted from The New Iraqi Journal of Medicine with kind permission of the editor in chief)

Type of malignancies	Total number	Number in males	Number in females
Breast malignancies	10277	464(4.5%)	9813(95.5%)
Lung & bronchus malignancies	5157	4105(79.6%)	1052(20.4%)
Leukemias	4476	2618(58.5%)	1858(41.5%)
Bladder malignancies	4253	3250(76.4%)	1003(23.6%)
Brain & CNS malignancies	3871	2217(57.3%)	1654(42.7%)
NHL	3782	2283(60.4%)	1499(39.6%)
Colorectal malignancies	2736	1545(56.5%)	1191(43.5%)
Malignancies of larynx	2590	1998(77%)	592(23%)
Skin malignancies excluding Melanoma	2425	1342(55.4%)	1083(44.6%)
Stomach malignancies	2108	1246(59%)	862(41%)
Reproductive organs malignancies	1692	0	1692
Hodgkin disease	1502	925(61.6%)	577(38.4%)
Thyroid malignancies	1334	446(33.4%)	888(66.6%)
Malignancies of kidney, pelvis& ureter	1232	754(61%)	478(39%)
Malignancies of ovary	1203	0	1203
Prostate malignancies	1081	1081	0
Pancreas malignancies	1014	575(56.7%)	439(43.3%)
Bone & cartilage malignancies	999	58.7(58.8%)	412(41.2%)
Liver &bile ducts malignancies	637	358(56%)	279(44%)
Esophagus malignancies	539	342(63.5%)	197(36.5%)

Malignancies of the prostate was the leading cause malignancies in males in the United States of America accounting for 29% of the newly diagnosed cases [6]. In Iraq malignancies of the prostate was the tenth leading cause malignant disease in males accounting for 3.3% of the newly diagnosed cases in males.

The continued increase in the incidence of prostatic malignancies in United States of America has been attributed to screening with prostate-specific antigen testing [7, 8].

The most common form of malignancies in Europe were malignancies of the breast accounting for 13.5% of all malignant disease, followed by colorectal malignancies (12.9%) and lung malignancies (12.1%) [9].

In Nigeria cancers of the cervix (22.9%), breast (18.9%), ovary (8.2%), non-melanoma skin cancer (6.3%), and uterus (6.2%) were the most frequent

female cancers. In males, cancer of the prostate (16.5%), bladder (10.2%), non-melanoma skin (9.9%), colorectal (9.3%) and connective tissue (6.3%) were most common[7].Cancer in Africa is not only different from the cancer pattern in Iraq but also differs from the pattern observed in USA and Europe.

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