Current Cancer Situation in Thailand

Thiravud Khuhaprema M.D. F.I.C.S., F.R.C.S.T
Director, National Cancer Institute, Thailand

Common Cancer in Thailand

The estimated numbers of new cancer cases in Thailand in the year 1999 was 31,582 in men and 33,678 in women. These correspond to age-standardized rates of 127.7 per 100,000 for men and 125.5 per 100,000 in women.

The national estimates of the 10 leading cancers in men and women are shown as age-standardized rates and as number of cases (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Leading Cancers in Thailand, 1998 – 2000

Liver and bile duct cancer is the most common cancer in men (ASR=33.4), followed by lung cancer (ASR=20.6), colon & rectum cancer (ASR=8.8), and oral cancer (ASR=5.2). In women, cervix cancer is the most common (ASR=24.7), followed by breast cancer (ASR=20.5), liver and bile duct cancer (ASR=12.3) and lung cancer (ASR=9.3).

The very high incidence of liver cancer in the northeastern region means that liver and bile duct cancer is the major cancer of men in the whole country, with an estimated 8,298 new cases in 1999. Lung cancer is second in importance (4,947 new cases); taken together, these two sites are responsible for 41.9% of all cancer in men.

In women, cervix cancer is the most important (6,954 new cases), followed by breast cancer (5,854 new cases), liver and bile duct cancer (3,094 new cases) and lung cancer (2,344 new case), these four sites being responsible for 54.2% of all cancers in women.

Geographical variation of cancer incidence in Thailand

We have the results of the nine population based cancer registries: Chiang Mai,
Lampang, Nakhon Phanom, Udon Thani, Khon Kaen, Bangkok, Rayong, Prachuap Khiri Khan and Songkhla.

The age-standardized incidence rates (ASR) of cancer at all sites ranged from 104.5 per 100,000 (M) and 98.9 per 100,000 (F) in Songkhla to 242.0 per 100,000 (M) and 158.4 per 100,000 (F) in Udon Thani.

The 10 leading cancers in each registry are shown in terms of the age-standardized incidence rates.

In Chiang Mai, lung cancer is the most important site in men and the second place in women. Cervix cancer is the leading cancer in women. The incidence of cervix cancer in women is the highest amongst the nine registries.

In Lampang, the profile of leading cancer in men is similar to that in Chiang Mai. Lung cancer in men is even higher than in Chiang Mai (ASR = 53). Cervix cancer is the second common cancer in women, followed by breast cancer.

In the northeastern region: Nakhon Phanom, Udon Thani and Khon Kaen, the picture is dominated by liver cancer, by far the most common cancer in men (45-59% of all cancers) and women (24.2 – 32.4% of all cancers). Cervix cancer is second in frequency in women.

In Rayong, lung cancer is the most important cancer in men; followed by liver and bile duct cancer, esophageal cancer (ASR is highest in the nine registries). Cervix cancer is also very high incidence (ASR = 28.5) and followed by breast cancer and lung cancer.

In Bangkok, lung cancer is the most important cancer of men, followed by cancers of the liver and bile duct, and then the colorectal cancer. In women, breast cancer is the leading cancer, ahead of cervix cancer (in contrast to the other eight registries), and Colorectal cancer is third in frequency.

In Prachuap Khiri Khan, liver and bile and bile duct cancer is the most common cancer in both men and women. The second place is lung cancer in men and cervix cancer in women.

In Songkhla, the leading site in men is lung cancer followed by colorectum, oral cavity and esophagus. In women, cervix and breast cancers predominate; with Colorectal cancer in third place; liver and bile duct cancer is not even in the first the cancers.

Colorectal cancer incidence is increasing in both sexes. Therefore, liver, lung, breast, cervix and colorectal cancer are the 5 major cancers in Thailand which are responsible for about 50% of all cancers.

National Cancer Institute under the department of medical service, Ministry of Public Health has proposed the strategies for National Cancer Control Program in Thailand which consists of

1. Strategy for Cancer informatics
2. Strategy for Primary prevention
4. Strategy for Tertiary prevention
5. Strategy for Palliative cancer
6. Strategy for Cancer research

The main purpose of National Cancer Control Programs is reduction of Incidence and Mortality of Cancer and improvement of quality of cancer patient in Thailand.