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Cancer mortality among employed Japanese women from 1980 to 2015

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Background:

The prevalence of cancer mortality and morbidity in Japan has increased over the past decade. Cancers of the lung, stomach, pancreas, and colon are leading causes of cancer-related death for Japanese women between the ages of 25 and 64, who account for around 70% of the female workforce. Traditionally research on occupation-related health in Japan has focused on men, even as the number of working women continues to increase. Research on whether occupations and industries increase the cancer risk among Japanese working women is lacking.

Aim:

This study aims to assess patterns of and trends in mortality due to key cancers among women and the effect of the economic crisis in the mid-1990s separately for occupational and industrial categories.

Methods:

A repeated cross-sectional study was conducted with five-yearly mortality data from the Japanese Population Census and the National Vital Statistics from 1980 to 2015. For 1980, 1985 and 1990, we used the ninth revision of the International Classification of Disease and the tenth revision for 1995, 2000, 2010 and 2015. We examined the four leading cancers—lung, stomach, pancreas, and colorectal cancer— in Japanese women aged between 25 and 64 years. The age-standardised rates were computed across occupations and industries using the population of 1985 as a reference to analyse patterns in cause-specific mortality rates. We used Poisson regression analysis to measure mortality risk and changes in mortality trends across occupations and industries separately by cause of death after 2000.

Results:

The trends in age-standardised rates of lung, pancreatic and colorectal cancer increased among managers from 1980 to 2015. Similarly, trends in age-standardised lung and pancreatic cancer mortality among workers in the fishing and electricity industry increased during the same period. Mortality risk among managers is higher than among sales workers for lung (Incident rate ratio (IRR), 2.34; 95% CI, 1.67–3.28), stomach (IRR, 1.87; 95% CI, 1.52–2.29) and colorectal cancer (IRR, 2.04; 95% CI, 1.50–2.77). Similarly, workers in the mining and fishing industries had quite high mortality rates for all cancers compared with wholesale and retail workers. The trend in pancreatic cancer mortality among female transport workers increased by 11% on or after 2000 compared to before. Similarly, stomach cancer mortality increased by 4.8% among workers in the transportation and communication industries after 2000.

Conclusion:

The mortality among female workers in Japan differed considerably by occupation and industry from 1980 to 2015. The trends in cancer mortality, however, declined over the study period in most occupations and industries. It is vital to monitor cancer mortality trends for improving the health and well-being of employed Japanese women.

Have you got a Conflict of Interest?: No