

Death from cancer more likely in New Zealand

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Although cancer death rates in New Zealand are falling, they are still substantially higher than Australian rates.

That is one of the findings in a University of Auckland study that compared trends in New Zealand and Australia's [cancer death](#) and [incidence rates](#) (and is published in the latest NZ Medical Journal).

A previous study showed that cancer mortality in New Zealand in 1996-97 was substantially higher than that expected from Australian rates. This study compared cancer mortality and incidence in New Zealand for 2000-2007 with rates in Australia, to assess if any differences had persisted or changed.

In the study, the numbers of cancer deaths in New Zealand, (by type of cancer, year, sex, and five year age group), were compared to the numbers that would have occurred if NZ rates had been the same as those in Australia. Trends over time, and also [cancer incidence](#), were assessed by researchers.

"From this latest study, there were an average of 586 (or 15.5 percent of the total) more deaths each year from cancer in New Zealand [women](#) than expected from Australian rates, and 197 (4.6 percent) more deaths in men," says senior investigator, Professor Mark Elwood, a specialist in cancer epidemiology from the University of Auckland.

He says, there was no significant change over time in these differentials.

"Higher cancer mortality was seen for the most common sites and the greatest excesses were for colorectal cancer in both men and women. Cancer incidence in New Zealand women was 3.3 percent higher, and the incidence in men was 4.7 percent lower, than in Australia."

"Over this time period, cancer mortality has fallen substantially in both countries - from 1990 to 2007 - by about 20 percent in women and 24 percent in men," says Professor Elwood.

"It's clear from this study that [cancer mortality](#) remains substantially higher in New Zealand than in Australia, especially for women," he says. "While the differences are slightly smaller than in 1996-97, there has been little change since 2000. The greater differences in deaths, than in the incidence of cancer suggest that patient survival is lower in New Zealand."

The research article 'Cancer mortality and incidence trends; comparing New Zealand and Australia for the period 2000-2007' appears in the latest issue of the *NZ Medical Journal* (on 15 August 2014).

More information: "Cancer mortality and incidence trends comparing New Zealand and Australia for the period 2000–2007" J Mark Elwood, Sally Ioannides, Lamees Alafeishat. *New Zealand Medical Journal* 15th August 2014, Volume 127 Number 1400 www.nzma.org.nz/journal/read-t...vol-127-no-1400/6255

Provided by University of Auckland

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