

# REPORT CARD 2000

The state of cancer care today

## PART 1 Cancer in Canada: then & now

Information is the primary weapon in the fight to improve cancer care. What are the needs of people with cancer? Where are they not being met? What can we do about it?

Decisions that affect care are made every day by a multitude of players at different levels in our health care system. These decisions (i.e. postponing the purchase of a second radiography machine or tightening up immigration or licensing rules for foreign professionals) are generally taken in response to very real social or budgetary pressures. But their cumulative impact on the care people receive can be considerable, and all the more damaging because it comes unexpected.

This report card takes the needs of people with cancer as its starting point and traces problems up the decision-making ladder to find the appropriate target points for change. Part I attempts to describe where we are in the battle against cancer. Are the chances of surviving cancer improving? How many Canadians are in need of cancer services at any given time? For Part II, Cancer Care in Canada worked with provincial cancer agencies or Ministry of Health officials to put together a sketch of cancer prevalence and care capabilities in each province. How many people are currently living with a cancer diagnosis? Do outcomes vary according to where you live? Is access to cancer care professionals comparable in all provinces? These are basic questions, but ones that are difficult to answer with the data

currently available. We hope that revealing the gaps in current information will spur efforts to complete the picture and improve decision making.

Part III of the report zeros in on one of the most pressing problems in cancer care today: the serious and growing shortage of cancer care professionals, especially radiation therapists, medical and radiation oncologists, and oncology nurses. How many are there? How many do we need? What are the barriers to training, employing and retaining a sufficient supply? What are different provinces doing to address the shortages?

As cancer care advocates, we need to know where our efforts should be directed and what we can hope to achieve. Solid information about the state of cancer care in this country is needed, along with a commitment from decision makers at all levels to recognize how the choices they make affect the lives of people with cancer.

Send us your comments on this report, by mail, email or through the Cancer Advocacy Coalition website at: [www.canceradvocacycoalition.com](http://www.canceradvocacycoalition.com)  
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FIGURE 1: How many people in your province will be diagnosed with cancer this year?

LEGEND: Between 1970 and 2000, the number of new cancer cases diagnosed in Canada every year has increased from just over 50,000 to the current 132,000. As recently as 1985, the number stood well below 100,000. Much of this increase can be attributed to population growth and the aging of the Canadian population; the National Cancer Institute estimates that age-standardized incidence\* of cancer has risen only slightly since 1970, with almost all the increase appearing among women.

\*Estimates are adjusted to match the age distribution of the Canadian population in 1991.  
Source: Health Canada, Canadian Cancer Statistics 2000, p. 18. Figures are estimated according to 2000 population estimates and include all cancers except non-melanoma skin cancer.

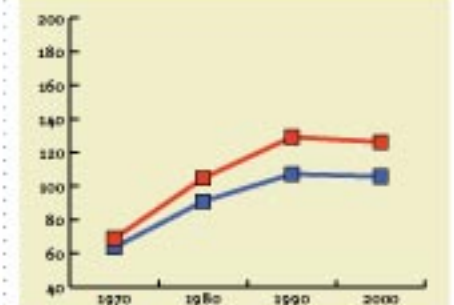
FIGURE 2: Have the chances of surviving cancer improved over the past 40 years?

INCIDENCE = the number of new cases of a given type of cancer diagnosed per year  
MORTALITY = the number of deaths attributed to a particular type of cancer during the year  
AGE-STANDARDIZED = estimates are adjusted to match the age distribution of the Canadian population in 1991.

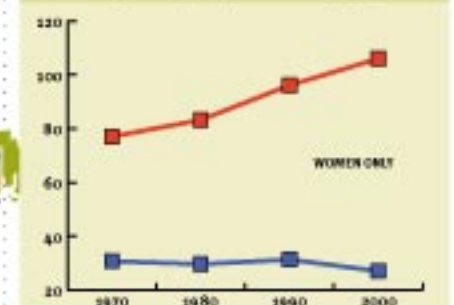
LEGEND: RED LINES represent trends in incidence rates, while BLUE LINES are trends in mortality from each type of cancer. In lung cancer, the incidence has almost doubled in 30 years, and mortality almost the same, indicating that chances for curing lung cancer remain very limited. In contrast, the incidence of breast and prostate cancer has risen dramatically in Canada, but mortality has actually dropped in the last decade, due to earlier detection and advances in our ability to control and cure these cancers.

Source: Health Canada, Canadian Cancer Statistics 2000, p. 34-7 and 43.

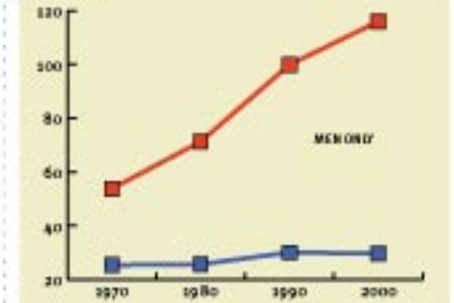
Trends in age-standardized Canadian incidence (RED) and mortality (BLUE) rates per 100,000 (1970, 1980, 1990, 2000)



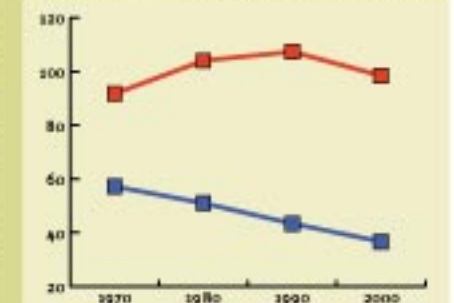
LUNG CANCER In 2000, 20,600 new cases of lung cancer will be diagnosed, and 17,700 Canadians will die from the disease, including 8000 people under age 70.



BREAST CANCER In 2000, 19,200 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer, and 5,500 women will die from the disease, including 2,700 women under age 70.



PROSTATE CANCER In 2000, 16,900 Canadian men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer, and 4,200 men will die from the disease, including 700 men under age 70.



COLORECTAL CANCER In 2000, 17,000 Canadian will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and 6,500 will die from the disease, including 2,400 people under 70.

▶ BETWEEN 0.2% AND 0.5% OF THE POPULATION OF EACH PROVINCE WILL BE DIAGNOSED WITH CANCER THIS YEAR