Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

A common question of interest is “Is Cancer on the Rise?”. Cancer is known to be a disease that increases in incidence with increasing age. Control of communicable diseases, has increased life expectancy and therefore exposed more of the population towards the development of cancer. The increase in population due to growth also contributes to the increase in the number of cancer cases. Improved literacy, greater consciousness about health in general and awareness about cancer in particular makes more and more people seek medical advice at an earlier stage. Availability of sophisticated and improved diagnostic techniques aid in detection of tumours that would have been missed at earlier times. The question is whether cancer is on the increase after accounting for these factors and whether that rise is statistically significant.

One measure of determining such an increase would be to examine the age adjusted incidence rates (AAR) over time. This may or may not take into account all of the factors mentioned above. Nonetheless, it would give some indication of the trends in the disease. Cancer being a chronic disease (and unlike infectious diseases) with generally a long latent period and a rather prolonged clinical phase, year to year variations are slight. Therefore, in assessing time trends in AAR, the normal practice in registries across the world is to look at five yearly rates over decades. This would give a more definitive indication of the course of the disease. Nonetheless, the data presented here gives a fair account of the direction in which the incidence rates of the leading sites of cancer are proceeding across the years. Based on this, the report also provides an estimate of the burden of specific sites of cancer for the next decade. Such estimates will greatly facilitate deciding on priorities and planning site specific cancer control activities.

Cancer of the Corpus Uteri showed an increase in incidence rates in the four metros. The Annual Percentage Change (APC) was 5.8 in Bangalore and 3.8 in Delhi.

The Annual percentage of increase in cancer prostate in Chennai was 4.7 and 3.1 in Delhi.

In Chennai and Bangalore both males and females showed an increase in brain tumours. The annual percentage change was highest in Chennai females with an APC of 4.6.