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Investigation of poorer bladder cancer survival in women than men in NSW Australia: a data linkage study

Elizabeth Tracey
*University of Sydney, elizabeth.tracey@sydney.edu.au*

Hunter Watt
*University of Wollongong, hunter@uow.edu.au*

David Currow
*Cancer Institute New South Wales*

Jane Young
*Cancer Institute New South Wales*

Bruce Armstrong
*Cancer Institute New South Wales*

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Abstract
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INVESTIGATION OF POORER BLADDER CANCER SURVIVAL IN WOMEN THAN MEN IN NSW AUSTRALIA: A DATA LINKAGE STUDY

TRACEY Elizabeth 1, WATT Hunter 2, CURROW David 3, YOUNG Jane 1, ARMSTRONG Bruce 1

1The University of Sydney
2The University of Wollongong
3The Cancer Institute New South Wales (NSW)

We investigated the associations of a range of personal and clinical variables with bladder cancer survival in men and women in NSW to see if they can explain why bladder cancer survival is consistently poorer in women than in men. Bladder cancer is predominantly a disease of the elderly, the average age at diagnosis is 74 years, and has major impacts on quality of life. All 6,880 cases of bladder cancers diagnosed in NSW between 2000 and 2008 were linked to hospital separation data and to deaths. Cox proportional hazards regression models were constructed in those who did or did not undergo cystectomy. Sixteen per cent of bladder cancer patients underwent cystectomy (16 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women). Women who underwent cystectomy were 26 per cent more likely to die than men (Hazard Ratio (HR) 1.26, 95% confidence interval (CI) 1.00-1.59) after adjustment for age, stage, time from diagnosis to cystectomy, distance from treatment facility and country of birth. However, in those with a history of cystitis, the adjusted hazard was 55 per cent higher in women (HR 1.55, 95%CI 1.15-2.10) than men while, in the absence of this history, there was no difference in the hazard between women and men (HR 0.99, 95%CI 0.57-1.70). This apparent modification by cystitis of the effect of sex on bladder cancer outcome was not seen in patients treated only by resection: the adjusted HRs in women relative to men were 1.10 (95% CI 0.92-1.31) in those with a history of cystitis and 1.21 (95% CI 0.98-1.50) in those without. Women’s poorer survival from bladder cancer than men’s remains unexplained. The possibility, however, that some factor associated with a history of cystitis may contribute to or explain the poorer outcome in women merits further investigation.