Increasing Rates of Uterine Cancer in Wisconsin

Emerging Trends - from the Wisconsin Cancer Registry System (WCRS)

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Introduction

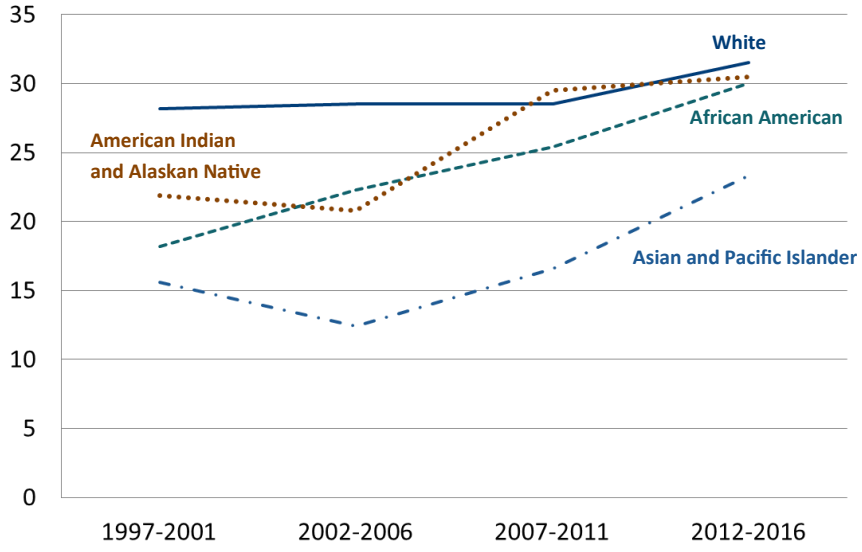
Most major cancers (colorectal, lung, breast, and prostate) are decreasing in Wisconsin, but uterine cancer is one of the few exceptions (along with liver, pancreatic, and melanoma cancers). Uterine cancer is the fourth most common cancer diagnosed and the seventh most common cause of cancer death among women in Wisconsin. Wisconsin mirrors the national trend of uterine cancer increasing most rapidly among African-American women (1).

This report presents Wisconsin incidence and death rates per 100,000 women, age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population. Data on new cases of invasive uterine cancer diagnosed during 1997–2016 were obtained from WCRS, the population-based state cancer registry (2). The small number of cases for minority races necessitated five-year intervals. Data on uterine cancer deaths during 1995–2015 were based on death certificate information reported to state vital statistics offices and compiled into a national file, the National Center for Health Statistics. All age-adjusted rates were calculated in SEER*Stat, version 8.3.5.

Uterine Cancer Trends by Race

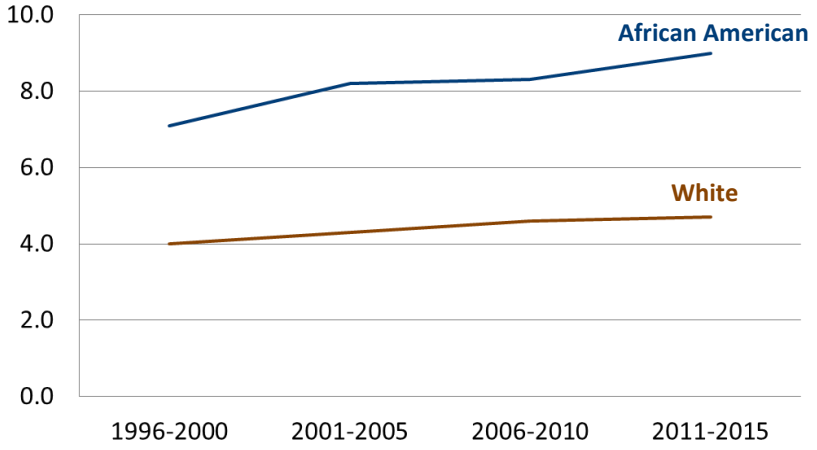
Data on new cases of invasive uterine cancer from WCRS show the rate of uterine cancer cases increased during 1997-2016 with larger increases among African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, and Asian or Pacific Islander women as compared to white women. The uterine cancer five-year average incidence rate for 2012-2016 was virtually the same among white, African American, and American Indian and Alaskan Native women, but higher than Asian and Pacific Islander women.

Figure 1. Trends in Uterine Cancer Incidence by Race, Wisconsin, 1996-2016
(Age-Adjusted Rate per 100,000)



Uterine cancer deaths were higher during the most recent five-year period compared with earlier years covered in this analysis. African American women were almost twice as likely to die from uterine cancer as white women during 2011-2015. The numbers of uterine cancer deaths among American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Asian and Pacific Islander women were too limited for reliable analyses.

Figure 2. Trends in Uterine Cancer Mortality, African American and White Races, Wisconsin, 1996-2015
(Age-Adjusted Rate per 100,000)



Risks for Uterine Cancer

The most common type of uterine cancer was endometrial (the lining of the uterus) cancer, which accounted for over 85% of uterine cancer and occurred most often in women over age 50. Endometrial cancer is often detected at an early stage because it frequently produces abnormal vaginal bleeding, which prompts women to see their doctors. If endometrial cancer is discovered early, a hysterectomy is usually the cure. Approximately 90% of women with uterine cancer report abnormal vaginal bleeding. Other common symptoms include pelvic pain, bleeding between periods, and bleeding after menopause (3).

One contributing factor to increasing uterine cancer incidence could be excess body weight; women who are overweight are approximately two to four times as likely to develop endometrial cancer as are women at a healthy weight (4). Other factors include insufficient physical activity, increasing prevalence of diabetes, increased exposure to estrogen, taking Tamoxifen, and family members who had uterine, ovarian, or colon cancer (5).

Conclusion

While new cases of uterine cancer are increasing among all racial groups, African American women experienced the highest increase, and deaths from the disease were twice as high for African American women compared to white women. Possible reasons could be more aggressive tumors, less access to health care, higher rates of obesity, and longer exposure to the estrogen hormone (6).

Promoting awareness among women and health care providers of the need for timely evaluation of gynecological abnormalities, such as vaginal bleeding, would increase early detection. Public health awareness is important, but more research is also needed to address all the factors that contribute to the differences in incidence and mortality between racial groups.

More Information about Uterine Cancer

- Wisconsin Interactive Statistics on Health (WISH): https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wish/cancer/index.htm
- Cancer-Rates.Info: https://www.cancer-rates.info/wi/
- CDC. What You Need to Know about Uterine Cancer: https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/uterine/index.htm
- American Cancer Society. Endometrial Cancer: https://www.cancer.org/cancer/endometrial-cancer.html
- National Institute of Health. Uterine Cancer: https://www.cancer.gov/types/uterine

References

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2. Wisconsin Cancer Reporting System, Office of Health Informatics, Division of Public Health, Department of Health Services. WCRS Statistics and Publications. https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/wcrs/data-pubs.htm

3. Kurman, Robert, Maria Luisa Carcangiu, Steven J. Herrington (eds). *World Health Organization classification of tumours of female reproductive organs*. Lyon, France: IARC Press, 2014.

4. Steele, C. Brooke, Cheryl C. Thomas, S. Jane Henley, et al. "Vital signs: trends in incidence of cancers associated with overweight and obesity—United States, 2005–2014." *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep 66 (2017)*:1052–8. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28981482

5. CDC, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Gynecologic Cancers. What are the Risk Factors?" https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/uterine/basic_info/risk_factors.htm/

6. Cote, Michele L. , Julie Ruterbusch, Sara H. Olson, et al. "The growing burden of endometrial cancer: a major racial disparity affecting black women." *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev 24* (2015):1407–15. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28981482