Trends in net survival from skin malignant melanoma in six European Latin countries: results from the SUDCAN population-based study

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In Europe as a whole, survival from skin malignant melanoma (SMM) has increased constantly since the 1980s. The aim of the SUDCAN collaborative study was to compare the trends in the 5-year net survival from SMM and in related excess mortality rate between six European Latin countries (Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland). The data were extracted from the EUROCAR-5 database (end of follow-up: 01 January 2009). First, the net survival was studied over the 2000–2004 period using the Pohar-Perme estimator. For trend analyses, the study period was specific to each country. The results are reported from 1992 to 2004 in France, Italy, Spain, and Switzerland and from 2000 to 2004 in Belgium and Portugal. The analyses were carried out using a flexible excess rate modeling. Over the 2000–2004 period, the 5-year net survival from SMM ranged from 79 (Portugal) to 90% (Switzerland). In all countries, net survival was higher in women versus men and in young versus old age groups. From 1992 to 2004, the 5-year net survival increased the most in the countries with the lowest survivals in 1992 (+9% in Italy and Spain vs. +2% in Switzerland or +4% in France). The differences between countries decreased between 1992 and 2004. Although survival increased to a lower or higher extent in all countries during the period studied, significant differences in net survival from SMM persisted among the six countries studied. Health policies should mainly enhance early diagnosis by increasing public awareness and with screening campaigns. Furthermore, new immunotherapies, which will be approved soon hopefully, should also be used to improve the outcomes of SMM treatment. European Journal of Cancer Prevention 25:S77–S84 Copyright © 2016 Wolters Kluwer Health, Inc. All rights reserved.


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Introduction

The SUDCAN study aims to compare cancer net survivals between Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland. In these countries, in 2012, the age-standardized (world) incidence rates of skin malignant melanoma (SMM) ranged from 6.7 (Portugal) to 20.3 (Switzerland) and the mortality rates ranged from 1.0 (Portugal, Spain) to 2.4 (Switzerland) per 100 000 person-years (Ferlay et al., 2013). Despite some differences in age-specific incidence rates, the age-standardized incidence rates were similar in men and women, except in Belgium. Overall, the incidence and mortality rates are increasing in many European countries, but remaining stable in others (Marcos-Gragera et al., 2010; Steliarova-Foucher et al., 2014).

As reported by the EUROCAR-5 study, the European mean age-standardized 5-year relative survival from SMM in the period 2000–2007 was 83.2% (De Angelis et al., 2014). The survival from SMM has increased constantly in Europe since the 1980s (Sant et al., 2001). It was historically higher in women than in men, but this difference decreased over the past decades.

The main risk factor for SMM is the intermittent exposure to ultraviolet radiation, be it natural (sun) or artificial (indoortanning) (IARC, 2012). The main prognostic factors for SMM are the stage at diagnosis (Breslow thickness) (Balch et al., 2004), the histologic type, the