

**Variation in survival after diagnosis of breast cancer in Switzerland.**

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**BACKGROUND:** Survival after diagnosis of cancer is a key criterion for cancer control. Major survival differences between time periods and countries have been reported by the EURO CARE studies. We investigated whether similar differences by period and region existed in Switzerland.

**METHODS:** Survival of 11,376 cases of primary invasive female breast cancer diagnosed between 1988 and 1997 and registered in seven Swiss cancer registries covering a population of 3.5 million was analysed.

**RESULTS:** Comparing the two periods 1988-1992 and 1993-1997, age-standardized 5 year relative survival improved globally from 77% to 81%. Furthermore, multivariate analysis adjusting for age, tumour size and nodal involvement identified regional survival differences. Survival was lowest in the rural parts of German-speaking eastern Switzerland and highest in urbanised regions of the Latin- and German-speaking northwestern parts of the country.

**CONCLUSIONS:** This study confirms that survival differences are present even in a small and affluent, but culturally diverse, country like Switzerland, raising the issue of heterogeneity in access to care and quality of treatment.