

Survival after breast cancer in younger women in Switzerland

Anita Feller^{1,2}, Alexandre Bodmer³, Andrea Bordoni⁴, Christine Bouchardy⁵, Silvia Dehler⁶, Silvia Ess⁷, Fabio Levi^{8,9},
Isabelle Konzelmann¹⁰, Elisabetta Rapiti⁵, Annik Steiner¹¹, Kerri Clough-Gorr^{2,12} and the NICER working group

¹National Institute for Cancer Epidemiology and Registration (NICER); ²Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM), Zurich; ³University Hospital Geneva; ⁴Ticino Cancer Registry, Locarno; ⁵Geneva Cancer Registry, Geneva; ⁶Cancer Registry of the Cantons Zurich and Zug, Zürich; ⁷Cancer Registry St. Gallen-Appenzell, St. Gallen; ⁸Neuchâtel Cancer Registry, Neuchâtel; ⁹Vaud Cancer Registry, Lausanne; ¹⁰Valais Cancer Registry, Sion; ¹¹SAKK Coordinating Center, Bern; ¹²Section of Geriatrics, Boston University

BACKGROUND

In developed countries, breast cancer (BC) is the most frequent cancer in women aged less than 40 years. It accounts for 30-40% of all female cancers and is the leading cause of cancer death for young women.

Previous studies reported that younger women were diagnosed with more advanced and aggressive tumours and showed lower survival compared to their older counterparts [1]. However, Swiss studies investigating breast cancer survival found no survival differences between younger and older women [2,3].

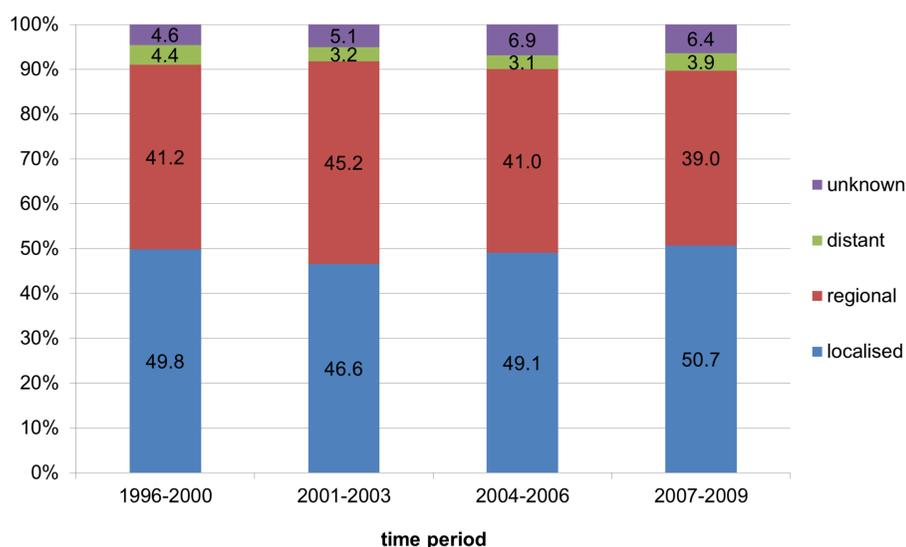
DATA & METHODS

Data on BC cases diagnosed before the age of 50 years were obtained from 11 Swiss cancer registries (CRs) for the incidence years 1996-2009. SEER summary stage was calculated based on TNM classification system.

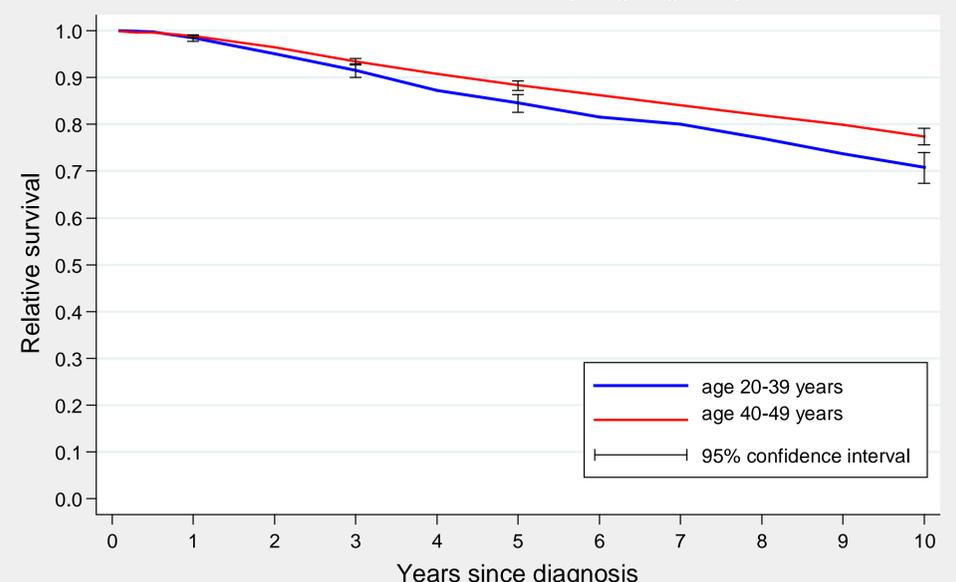
Relative survival (RS) was estimated by dividing the observed survival (OS) after diagnosis by the survival as expected in the general female population based on all cases diagnosed between 1996-2009 (complete analyses). OS and RS probabilities were calculated consecutive time intervals up to 10 years after diagnosis (age-groups 20-39, 40-49 and 20-49 years).

RESULTS

Distribution of incident breast cancer cases by stage



Relative survival by age-group



N (age 20-39 years): 1,889
N (age 40-49 years): 6,084

	N*	5-year survival		10-year survival	
		RS%	[95% CI]	RS%	[95% CI]
Age 20-39					
Localized	669	93.5	[92.3;94.6]	86.1	[83.9;88.1]
Regional	646	83.4	[81.6;85.0]	65.1	[62.1;67.9]
Distant	36	13.0	[7.0;20.9]	5.0	[1.4;12.2]
Unknown	97	80.6	[75.5;84.7]	73.1	[66.7;78.4]
All stages	1,448	84.6	[83.6;85.5]	70.8	[69.2;72.4]
Age 40-49					
Localized	2,384	95.0	[93.9;96.0]	90.7	[88.8;92.3]
Regional	1,932	87.3	[85.5;88.8]	72.7	[69.8;75.4]
Distant	198	35.9	[28.7;43.1]	17.3	[10.6;25.4]
Unknown	212	72.1	[64.2;78.6]	56.1	[44.8;66.0]
All stages	4,726	88.3	[87.4;89.2]	77.5	[75.9;79.0]

* based on cancer registries providing TNM-information (9 out of 11 CRs)

The distribution of breast cancer cases by stage and time period showed no evidence of any trend. For all stages combined, RS in women aged 20-49 years was 87.7% (95% CI 86.8-88.5) after 5 years and 75.6% (95% CI 74.3-77.3) ten years after diagnosis. 10-year RS decreased with advancing stage; 89.8% (95% CI 87.9-91.4) localized, 70.6 (95% CI 67.8-72.2) regional and 19.6% (95% CI 12.7-27.5) distant. Cases with unknown stage had a 10-year RS of 60.3% (95% CI 50.4-68.8).

Overall, 5- and 10-year RS was lower among women aged 20-39 years compared to women aged 40-49 years at time of diagnosis. Analyses by age-group and stage revealed lower survival for women aged 20-39 years than women aged 40-49 years for all stages. However, cases with t-unknown stage information showed inverse results with 10-year RS of 73.1% (95% CI 66.7-78.4) in women aged 20-39 years versus 56.1% (95% CI 44.8-66.0) in women aged 40-49 years.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study found a lower survival in women with BC aged 20-39 years at time of diagnosis compared to women aged 40-49 years. However, whether or not age is an independent risk factor remains unclear. Further investigations are needed to study the impact of prognostic factors on BC survival in younger women.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- 1 Fredholm H, Eaker S, Frisell J, Holmberg L, Fredriksson I, Lindman H. Breast cancer in young women: poor survival despite intensive treatment. *PLoS One*. 2009;4(11):e7695.
- 2 Rapiti E, Fioretta G, Verkooijen HM, et al. Survival of young and older breast cancer patients in Geneva from 1990 to 2001. *European journal of cancer*. Jul 2005;41(10):1446-1452.
- 3 Bouchardy C, Pury P, Lorez M, Clough-Gorr K, Bordoni A. Trends in Breast Cancer Survival in Switzerland. *SKB*. 2011;4:326-328.