

Estimates of the incidence and prevalence of hepatocellular carcinoma in Italy in 2002 and projections for the years 2007 and 2012

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ABSTRACT

Aims and background. Data on liver cancer incidence and prevalence in Italy are not available on a national and regional level.

Methods. We provided estimates of the number of incident and prevalent cases for hepatocellular carcinoma in Italy overall and in various regions in 2002 and gave projections for the years 2007 and 2012. We obtained annual numbers of incident cases of hepatocellular carcinoma by combining mortality data provided by the World Health Organization and information on survival for liver cancer, and subsequently derived five-year prevalence for hepatocellular carcinoma by combining incidence with information on survival.

Results. In 2002, there were about 5800 incident cases and 4300 prevalent cases of hepatocellular carcinoma in Italy. The most reliable estimate of hepatocellular carcinoma incident cases in Italy in 2007 is between 5500 and 6000, and this figure is likely to decline to 5000-5500 in 2012. The best estimate of prevalence is about 4000 cases in 2007, which is likely to decline to 3700 in 2012.

Conclusions. Incidence and prevalence of hepatocellular carcinoma are likely to remain approximately stable between 2002 and 2007 and slightly decrease in the subsequent quinquennia. These projections are, however, subject to large uncertainties because of the problems in diagnosis and death certification for this neoplasm, particularly for the elderly.

Key words: hepatocellular carcinoma, incidence, Italy, mortality, prevalence.

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