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Questions and Answers (Q&A)

IARC launches website of EU-CanIneq, a project to measure and address socioeconomic inequalities in cancer across Europe

1. Who are the partners in this project?

The EU-CanIneq project is a European Union (EU) initiative dedicated to reducing socioeconomic inequalities in cancer across Europe. Funded by the European Commission in collaboration with Erasmus MC (in the Netherlands), EU-CanIneq supports the European Cancer Inequalities Registry by coordinating a research and data framework to develop and expand indicators of socioeconomic inequalities in cancer mortality.

2. What are socioeconomic factors, and how are they defined?

Socioeconomic factors are social and economic conditions, such as income, education level, occupation, and housing, that shape individuals' access to resources and opportunities. They influence lifestyle, quality of life, access to and use of medical services, and, ultimately, health and cancer outcomes.

3. How are socioeconomic factors linked to cancer risk and cancer mortality?

Socioeconomic factors influence cancer risk and cancer mortality by shaping exposure to risk factors and access to prevention, early detection, and treatment. For example, individuals with lower socioeconomic position often have higher exposure to smoking, poor diet, and environmental hazards while having less access to health-care services, leading to disparities in cancer outcomes.

4. Why are socioeconomic factors critical in understanding cancer mortality?

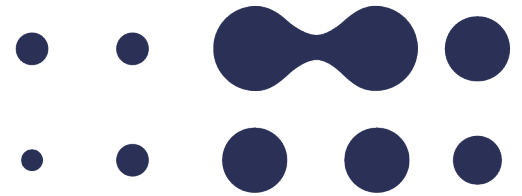
Socioeconomic factors are the most important determinant explaining the distribution of cancer between and within countries, everywhere and for most cancer types.

5. What new features and insights does this project offer?

The EU-CanIneq project offers, for the first time, a mapping of socioeconomic inequalities in cancer mortality across all European Union countries plus Iceland and Norway.

6. How can policy-makers and researchers use the results of this project?

By highlighting such cancer inequalities, the findings can guide targeted interventions, inform evidence-based policies, and improve the allocation of resources to underserved populations. In addition, the data can support



the evaluation of existing strategies and foster collaboration to reduce disparities and improve equity in cancer outcomes.

7. What strategies can be implemented to reduce socioeconomic inequalities in cancer?

The first step in reducing socioeconomic inequalities in cancer is recognizing the extent of these disparities and their impact on populations. Effective strategies must be cancer-specific but should generally focus on reducing inequalities along the cancer continuum, i.e. in exposure to cancer risk factors, such as tobacco smoking, and in access to timely diagnosis, early detection, and treatment.

8. In terms of cancer mortality, what populations or regions are most affected by socioeconomic inequalities, and why?

We found that countries in the Eastern and Central European areas and Baltic countries were most affected by socioeconomic inequalities in cancer mortality. However, among women, very high levels of cancer inequalities were also observed, rather surprisingly, in the Nordic countries.

9. Which cancer types are most affected by socioeconomic inequalities?

Cancers that are largely preventable are most affected by socioeconomic factors. These include tobacco-related cancers, such as lung cancer, and cervical cancer.

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The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) is part of the World Health Organization. Its mission is to coordinate and conduct research on the causes of human cancer, the mechanisms of carcinogenesis, and to develop scientific strategies for cancer control. The Agency is involved in both epidemiological and laboratory research and disseminates scientific information through publications, meetings, courses, and fellowships. If you wish your name to be removed from our press release emailing list, please write to com@iarc.who.int.