

Fact Sheet - Pancreatic Disease

Pancreatic Cancer

Statistics

It is estimated that in 2007, over 37,000 people in the United States will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and that over 33,000 people will die from the disease.

Pancreatic cancer has a 98% mortality rate--the highest of any cancer. Seventy-five percent of people diagnosed with the disease will die within three to six months of diagnosis. Only 5% survive longer than five years. Pancreatic cancer is the 4th leading cause of cancer death in the United States.

There are no sensitive early detection methods, and effective treatments are extremely limited. Unfortunately, there has been little change in overall pancreatic cancer mortality rates over the past three decades.

About Pancreatic Cancer

Pancreatic cancer grows insidiously and initially does not cause symptoms. If the tumor blocks the common bile duct so that bile cannot pass into the intestines, the skin and whites of the eyes may become yellow and the urine may become dark. This condition is called jaundice. Pain often develops in the upper abdomen and sometimes spreads to the back. Cancer of the pancreas can also cause nausea, loss of appetite, depression, weight loss, and weakness.

If detected very early, pancreatic cancer can be cured by surgical resection. Unfortunately, early detection is more the exception than the rule. By the time the tumor is discovered, it is usually too far advanced to be cured by surgery. In instances in which surgery offers the possibility of a cure, a Whipple operation is usually performed in which a large part of the pancreas, the duodenum, and a portion of the bile duct are removed.

Research

Almost all research being done in the United States falls under the auspices of The National Cancer Institute (NCI), which is one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). We desperately need novel approaches and committed researchers to make progress against pancreatic cancer. Based on the increased survival rate for other deadly cancers (lung, colorectal and breast) we believe that increased investment in pancreatic cancer research can be expected to yield dramatic progress.

Funding for Pancreatic Cancer Research

From FY 2005 to FY 2007, NCI's funding for research into pancreatic cancer has remained steady at just under \$67m.

Of the top five leading causes of cancer deaths in the US, pancreatic cancer is the only one whose mortality rate is increasing. And yet while research into the other four leading causes of cancer deaths is backed by hundreds of millions of dollars of NCI funding, pancreatic cancer research receives only \$67m. The Federal government invests less money per fatality in pancreatic cancer research than in any other leading cancer.

It is important to sustain, and increase, NCI funding for research into the broad spectrum of cancers. The NPF supports the effort to increase overall funding for NCI, with a portion of the increased funding to be dedicated to pancreatic cancer research.

(See flip side for information about Pancreatitis)

Pancreatitis

Statistics

Pancreatitis is an inflammatory condition of the pancreas that is painful and at times deadly. Each year in the U.S., nearly 220,000 people will be afflicted with acute pancreatitis, and more than 80,000 people will be diagnosed with chronic pancreatitis. Despite the great advances in critical care medicine over the past 20 years, the mortality rate of acute pancreatitis has remained at about five percent.

Diagnosis of chronic pancreatitis is often difficult, and treatment is frequently delayed. Patients with chronic pancreatitis often endure severe pain and malnutrition, and have a higher risk of pancreatic cancer.

About Pancreatitis

In the United States, the most common cause of acute pancreatitis is gallstones. Other causes include chronic alcohol consumption, hereditary conditions, trauma, medications, infections, high lipid levels, hormonal abnormalities, and tumors that obstruct the pancreatic duct.

The treatment is usually supportive and may require a prolonged stay in an intensive care unit. Research is required to find medications that can reduce the severity of the acute inflammation.

Chronic pancreatitis is the progressive disorder associated with the destruction of the pancreas. The disease is more common in men and usually develops in people between 30 and 40 years of age. The most common causes are chronic alcohol consumption, hereditary diseases, genetic mutations, autoimmune conditions, and conditions that obstruct the pancreatic duct. The most common symptoms are diarrhea and upper abdominal pain. Patients can also develop malnutrition, weight loss, diabetes mellitus, and pancreatic cancer.

Research

While there are new initiatives in pancreatic research by the NIDDK including endoscopic clinical research in pancreatic and biliary diseases, pathophysiology, and a large clinical study in hereditary pancreatitis, there is still much work to be done.

Funding for Research in Pancreatitis

From 1999 to 2003, the NIDDK budget for pancreas research increased 350%. Grants increased from 19 to 56, with total funding increasing from \$4.3 million to over \$15 million. Unfortunately, this is still less than 1% of the total NIDDK FY03 appropriation. There are still a number of NIH programs that are yet to be funded including program projects, centers, fellowships, training and career development.

Many thanks to the National Cancer Institute and PANCAN for providing many of the statistics in this Fact Sheet.



Supported by an educational grant from Eli Lilly and Company



This fact sheet is provided courtesy of the National Pancreas Foundation. To learn more about our organization, please visit our website at www.pancreasfoundation.org.