

Understanding Nuances When Presenting Native American Data for Your Catchment Area

S. Nash, N. Joe, T. Kratzer, B. Morawski

University of New Mexico Comprehensive Cancer Center

1. Background

Accurate incidence, mortality, and survival statistics are critical to identifying disproportionate cancer burdens across racial and ethnic populations within the catchment area and setting priorities. A known data limitation for the Native American population is the ongoing racial misclassification of American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) people within the cancer registry system.

2. Goals

Our goals were to understand:

- Current methods for addressing racial misclassification of AIAN people in cancer surveillance data
- Potential limitations of these methods for determining catchment area cancer burden

3. Solutions and Methods

We will present current methods for addressing racial misclassification of AIAN people within cancer surveillance, including linkage to the Indian Health Service (IHS) patient registration system and restriction of analyses to only those counties serviced by the IHS (known as purchased/referred care delivery areas, or PRCDA). We will describe ongoing research that highlights the limitations of these methods, including survival analyses using national cancer registry data, and a comparison of county-level socioeconomic data from the University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Health Atlas, between PRCDA and non-PRCDA counties.

4. Outcomes

Analyses of national cancer registry data indicate that current methods for addressing bias introduced by racial misclassification of AIAN people in the central cancer registry system result in the exclusion of at least 30 percent of known tumors among AIAN people, and over 50 percent of the AIAN population from national statistics. Furthermore, those in non-PRCDA areas (i.e., those that are excluded) likely experience a different socioeconomic context than those who are not (i.e., those in PRCDA areas), meaning that published statistics based on PRCDA areas are unable to be generalized to all AIAN people.

5. Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Community Outreach and Engagement (COE) programs and researchers interpreting Native American population cancer surveillance data need to understand the nuances of the methods to reduce racial misclassification of AIAN people. These methods result in the exclusion of substantial portions of the AIAN population, and data may not be generalizable across all geographic regions.

We will present recommendations for COE programs to present cancer data for AIAN people in their catchment areas while taking into account all the data limitations. Additionally, we will highlight ongoing and future research that aims to improve racial misclassification methods to ensure the inclusion of all AIAN people diagnosed with cancer within cancer surveillance data.