Breast Cancer Mortality: Has Wisconsin Stood Its Ground?

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Objective: The primary purpose of this study is to explore state and county trends in breast cancer mortality in Wisconsin. An additional aim is to evaluate and highlight regional variation in biennial mammography rates among Wisconsin counties.

Methods: Age-adjusted and age-specific breast cancer mortality data from CDC WONDER were analyzed for Wisconsin and its 72 counties. Biennial mammography data from Metastar were analyzed by county for the period 2002-2004. These data included women on Medicare aged 65-74.

Results: Breast cancer mortality rates in Wisconsin have continued to decline steadily from 34.6 per 100,000 in 1990 to 23.6 per 100,000 in 2004. County mortality data displayed substantial geographic clustering. The difference between the highest county rate of 104 deaths per 100,000 and the lowest rate of 52.9 deaths per 100,000 was statistically significant. Mammography rates were reportable for all 72 counties. The average rate for the counties in the highest quartile was 1.5 times that of the average of the lowest quartile. The overall screening rate for Wisconsin from 2002-2004 was 69.3%.

Conclusion: Wisconsin is fast approaching the Healthy People 2010 target for breast cancer mortality and mammography rates. For both variables, however, considerable variation among counties still exists. Interventions such as detailed county assessments, regional campaigns, and community programs to improve breast cancer screening rates may hold the key to improving mortality.