

The information Cancer Registrars collect is not limited to the episodic information contained in the health care facility record. Cancer Registrars bridge this information gap by capturing a complete summary of the patient's disease from diagnosis through their lifetime.

The abstract, or summary, provides an ongoing account of the cancer patient's history, diagnosis, treatment, and current status.

In addition to managing and reporting cancer data, registrars serve in multiple other professional activities. Cancer Registrars participate in cancer program, institution, and community benefit activities as part of the health care leadership team. Registrars provide benchmarking services, monitor quality of care and clinical practice guidelines, assess patterns of care and referrals, and monitor adverse outcomes including mortality and comorbidity. Cancer Registrars may provide consultative services on many issues including registry management and program standards.

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The Cancer Registry and the Registrar

Cancer Registrars ensure that timely, accurate, and complete data are maintained on all types of cancer diagnosed and/or treated within a health care institution or within a defined population. These data are then used to inform a wide variety of public health decisions and provide rich information for cancer diagnosis and treatment education.



What is a Cancer Registry?

A Cancer Registry is an information system designed for the collection, management, and analysis of data on persons with the diagnosis of a malignant or neoplastic disease (cancer). Cancer Registries can be classified into three general types:

- Health care institution registries maintain data on all patients diagnosed and/or treated for cancer at their facility. Health care facilities report cancer cases to the central or state Cancer Registry as required by law.
- Central Registries are population-based registries that maintain data on all cancer patients within certain geographical areas.
- Special purpose registries maintain data on a particular type of cancer, such as brain tumors.

What information is maintained in the Cancer Registry and how is it used?

Cancer Registries maintain a wide range of demographic and medical information, such as:

- Demographic information includes age, gender, race/ethnicity, birthplace and residence.
- Medical history includes physical findings, screening information, occupation and any history of a previous cancer.
- Diagnostic findings include types, dates and results of procedures used to diagnose cancer.
- Cancer information, including primary site, cell type and extent of disease.
- Cancer therapy, including surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone or immunotherapy.
- Follow-up, including annual information about treatment, recurrence, and patient status.

Public health and medical providers utilize these data in a wide variety of ways. Specifically, they are used to:

- Evaluate patient outcome, quality of life, and satisfaction issues and implement procedures for improvement.

How do Cancer Registries ensure confidentiality?

Confidentiality of patient identifying information and related medical data is strictly maintained at each Cancer Registry. Aggregate data are analyzed and published without any patient identifiers at all.

Why maintain a Cancer Registry?

Maintaining a Cancer Registry ensures that health officials have accurate and timely information, while ensuring the availability of data for treatment, research, and educational purposes:

- Local, state and national cancer agencies use registry data in defined areas to make important public health decisions that maximize the effectiveness of limited public health funds, such as the placement of screening programs.
- Cancer Registries are valuable research tools for those interested in the etiology, diagnosis and treatment of cancer.
- Fundamental research on the epidemiology of cancer is initiated using the accumulated data.
- Lifetime follow-up is an important aspect of the Cancer Registry. Current patient follow-up serves as a reminder to physicians and patients to schedule regular clinical examinations and provides accurate survival information.

- Provide follow-up information for cancer surveillance.
- Calculate survival rates by utilizing various data items and factors.
- Provide information for cancer program activities.
- Analyze referral patterns.
- Allocate resources at the health care facility, the community, region or state level.
- Develop educational programs for health care providers, patients and the general public.
- Report cancer incidence as required under state law.
- Evaluate efficacy of treatment modalities.

1926

First hospital registry at Yale-New Haven Hospital in New Haven, CT



1935
1946

First central Cancer Registries (Connecticut and California)



1956

American College of Surgeons requires a Cancer Registry for approved cancer programs.



1971

National Cancer Act budgets monies to the National Cancer Institute for research, detection and treatment of cancer.

What is a Cancer Registrar?

Cancer Registrars are data management experts who report cancer statistics for various healthcare agencies. Registrars work closely with physicians, administrators, researchers, and health care planners to provide support for cancer program development, ensure compliance of reporting standards, and serve as a valuable resource for cancer information with the ultimate goal of preventing and controlling cancer. The Cancer Registrar is involved in managing and analyzing clinical cancer information for the purpose of education, research, and outcome measurement.

How does one become certified as a cancer registrar?

The National Cancer Registrars Association's Council on Certification administers an examination semi-annually for those eligible to be Certified Tumor Registrars (CTR). Candidates must meet eligibility requirements that include a combination of experience in the Cancer Registry field and educational background. After successfully passing the certification examination, the CTR credential is awarded. Persons who have

What is the future for Cancer Registrars?

The evidenced-based medicine of today recognizes the skills and abilities of the Cancer Registrar. The increase in the number and types of health care facilities, central registries, consulting firms and registry software companies make the demand for qualified Cancer Registrars greater than ever. There is tremendous potential for growth in government agencies, insurance, pharmaceutical and other health care industries as accurate, timely data increasingly impacts cancer control efforts. Cancer Registrars who possess management and administrative skills, knowledge of medical sciences, programming, database management, data retrieval and analysis will find a ready market for those skills.

How does one become a Cancer Registrar?

Traditionally, Cancer Registrars were trained on the job. Today, formal education programs at colleges around the country teach cancer data management. Curricula include cancer and its management, medical terminology, anatomy and physiology, biostatistics and epidemiology, cancer data abstracting, database record management, cancer program management, Cancer Registry procedures, among others. In addition to formal college courses, training is available from programs that vary from one to two weeks in duration and provide an intensive training experience in one or more aspects of registry operations. Training courses combined with on-the-job learning remains a viable route for a career in the Cancer Registry profession.

successfully completed the certification exam have demonstrated that they have met or exceeded the standard level of experience and technical knowledge required for effective cancer data management. To maintain a certified status, the current continuing education requirements of NCRA must be met. The required continuing education and training keeps the CTR abreast of new developments in the field of oncology and registry data management. Thus the registrars' knowledge and skills are continuously enhanced.

For more information concerning certification, visit www.ctrexam.org, e-mail ctrexam@ncra-usa.org, or call 703-299-6640.

1973

Surveillance, Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) Program of NCI establishes the first national Cancer Registry

1992

Congress establishes a National Program of Cancer Registries (Public Law 102-515).

1993

State laws make cancer a reportable disease.

The National Cancer Registrars Association

The National Cancer Registrars Association is the largest professional association of Cancer Registrars in the world. Its 4000+ membership represent a portion of Cancer Registrar professionals in the field. Many of NCRA members hold the Association's professional credential of Certified Tumor Registrar (CTR).

NCRA is a 30 year old organization with its 6 staff based in its headquarters office located in suburban Washington, DC. Staff works diligently to deliver on the association's programs which include:

- An annual Educational Convention which brings over 1000 professionals together for training and networking
- CTR Credential Management and Delivery
- National Cancer Registrars Week, the second week in April to bring recognition to the important work of the Cancer Registrar.
- Membership management
- Governance support – for NCRA's 12 member Board, 15 administrative committees, task forces, and council.

The Programs of NCRA follow its strategic management plan which can be found at its website, www.ncra-usa.org



NCRA Mission Statement

To promote education, credentialing, and advocacy for Cancer Registry professionals

NCRA Vision Statement

Serving professionals who provide data that make a difference in the war on cancer

NCRA Core Values

Networking, Mentoring, and Making a Difference